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ABSTRACT

In 1999, the LegiSchool Project planned to conduct the 12th in its series of televised Town Hall Meetings to provide a forum in which California high school students, educators, and legislators can engage in face-to-face dialogue about problems of mutual interest. For 1999, the topic is standards and tests in California high schools. This guide contains background material, articles, and critical thinking questions to help participants prepare for the meeting. The introduction contains six newspaper articles related to standards and high school testing and poses four critical thinking questions. The second section, "Standards and Accountability," contains two state bills related to testing and six articles from newspapers, with five critical thinking questions. Section 3, "High School Graduation Examination," focuses on California's graduation requirements, with two excerpts from proposed legislation, six newspaper articles, and six critical thinking questions. Section 4 considers social promotion through one state bill, three newspaper articles, and four questions to stimulate critical thinking. Section 5 discusses "New Ways To Meet the Standards" through six newspaper articles and four critical thinking questions. An appendix contains brief descriptions of first extraordinary session bills for 1999-2000. (SLD)

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A Town Hall Meeting

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Raising the Bar: Standards and Tests in California's High Schools

California State Capitol
April 30, 1999

The LegiSchool Project

This event is a production of The LegiSchool Project: An educational collaboration between California State University, Sacramento and the California State Legislature.

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A Town Hall Meeting

Raising the Bar:
Standards and Tests in California's High Schools

Dr. Barbara Arnstine, Project Moderator and Editor
Dr. Ken Futernick, Project Director and Editor
Dr. Timothy A. Hodson, Project Administrator
Kolleen Ostgaard, Project Coordinator and Reseacher

The LegiSchool Project

Spring 1999

Dear Town Hall Meeting Participants:

This spring, the LegiSchool Project will conduct the twelfth in a series of televised Town Hall Meetings from the State Capitol in Sacramento. Once again, the meeting will be broadcast live via cable on the California Channel.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum in which California high school students, educators, and legislators can engage in face-to-face dialogue about problems of mutual interest. The topic for this Town Hall Meeting is, ***Raising the Bar: Standards and Tests in California's High Schools***. Following this letter, you will find an introduction to the topic.

Participants at this event include students from Northern and Southern California classes who will be seated in the audience of Hearing Room 4202 at the Capitol. Several of these students will sit at the dias in front, along with legislators from both the Senate and the Assembly. One class watching from a school in Southern California will participate in the meeting by telephone.

The moderator, Barbara Arnstine from California State University, Sacramento, will lead a discussion among the panelists focusing on the issues presented in this study guide. Later in the meeting, she will take questions from the students seated in the audience and at the remote site.

The background material, articles, and critical thinking questions included in this guide are designed to help the participants prepare for the meeting. We would like to encourage those of you who are interested in viewing the Town Hall Meeting to read the materials and discuss the questions before the event takes place on Friday, April 30.

If you would like a video copy of the Town Hall Meeting or want information about the LegiSchool Project, call the LegiSchool Educator's Hotline at 1-800-321-1966 or write to us at:

California State University, Sacramento
The Center for California Studies
Attn: The LegiSchool Project
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081

We look forward to hearing from you and hope you enjoy the Town Hall Meeting!

Sincerely,

Ken Futernick

Ken Futernick, Ph.D.
Project Director

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Introduction: Raising the Bar

A major focus of Governor Gray Davis' election campaign was the improvement of public education, and to achieve that goal, an "Extraordinary Session" of the California Legislature was convened in January 1999. The bills offered in that legislative session were concerned solely with school reform. Several of the bills that addressed issues such as a high school exit examination, improved teacher training and higher standards for promotion were signed by the Governor in late March. The bills that Governor Davis supported in the extraordinary session are summarized in the Appendix, and you will want to look at those summaries to understand how our political leaders hope to improve education.

The key concept of school reform that these laws represent is seen in the Governor's description of "raising the bar." As the Governor says, "The purpose behind these bills is to ask more of teachers, students, principals and parents so that kids will have the very best chance possible to elevate their game." Raising the bar is about raising expectations of teachers, parents, pupils and schools in very concrete ways -- through examinations for students, accountability reviews for teachers, rewards for successful schools, and punishments for those that aren't.

Expectations can be very influential. It is very hard to have a good time when we don't expect to; and much easier when we do. In schools, students are tuned in to the expectations of teachers -- they know what is required of them and what they can get away with. Students who expect to go to college, rather than simply hoping to, approach their high school classes very differently -- they have to take certain courses and they have to get good grades. When we expect more of students, we usually get it.

The current plans for improving California's schools depend upon expecting more from students, teachers and schools. At our Town Hall Meeting, we are going to focus on the reforms that raise our expectations for students. We will consider legislation to end what is called "social promotion" so that students who do not meet academic standards for their grade level will not be allowed to move to the next grade. We will also examine the proposed high school "exit exam" which will require all seniors in California, effective in the year 2003, to pass the exam in order to graduate. In our final section we will take a look at some of the ways schools will attempt to raise expectations to achieve these higher standards.

One thing is very clear about this new legislation: much more will be asked of high school students. This is your opportunity to consider the merits of these changes and decide if they are best for you and the students who will follow you.

Each topic needs to be considered on its own merits. The articles that follow in the introduction will give you an overview of the proposals and the support and criticism they have received thus far. There is no doubt in the minds of California's voters that our schools could be better, and the Governor is widely admired for his willingness to try and improve public education. The question now is, are these the right reforms? Read on and prepare to make up your own mind.

Davis unveils school accountability initiative;
Education:
The governor's plan goes beyond reforms sought by his predecessor.

The Orange County Register, January 20, 1999
By: Daniel M. Weintraub and John Gittelsohn
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Gov. Gray Davis on Tuesday proposed giving the state unprecedented new powers to intervene in the management of bad schools that fail to improve.

The plan also calls for a system to reward good schools, an intensive new reading program, peer review for teachers and a statewide high school exit exam that students would have to pass before receiving a diploma.

"Every child deserves a world-class education," Davis said Tuesday. "The purpose behind these bills is to ask more of teachers, students, principals and parents so that kids will have the very best chance possible to elevate their game. "

Davis has been outlining his education proposals and dribbling out the details since his victory in the Nov. 3 election. But Tuesday, with the Legislature convening in special session to consider his ideas in a fast-track process, the new governor laid out the plans in detail, releasing copies of legislation that Democratic lawmakers will introduce on his behalf.

The accountability program is widely considered the major piece of unfinished business after three years of education policy changes in Sacramento. It also is potentially the most controversial.

The Legislature last year passed what it called an accountability bill, but that measure was limited to offering financial help to schools with poor test scores. There were no sanctions for schools that did not improve. Gov. Pete Wilson vetoed the bill, saying it lacked teeth.

Now Davis is proposing a measure that goes even further than the one Wilson was requesting.

The program would begin with the creation of an Academic Performance Index ranking of all the state's schools, based on test scores, attendance rates for students and staff, graduation rates and possibly other factors. Test results would have to account for at least 60 percent of a school's score.

Once ranked, all schools would be eligible for rewards of up to $150 per student if they showed significant improvement in any year. Davis suggested requiring improvement of at least 5 percent, but said the state Board of Education could set the level higher and probably ought to expect more improvement from the worst-performing schools.

Next, the state would invite schools whose test scores were among the bottom half nationally to participate in a "rescue" program. Up to 200 schools (140 elementary schools, 36 middle schools and 24 high schools) would participate each year. There are about 8,000 schools in the state.

If not enough schools volunteered, the state superintendent of public instruction and the Board of Education would fill out the list at random from those schools with scores below the 50th percentile.

Participating schools would get planning grants of up to $50,000 and be evaluated by an independent expert, who would help the school highlight its weaknesses and write a plan for improvement. The school would get as much as $150 per student to pay for new programs.

If the school failed to improve after two years, the state would step in.

The consequences would include reassigning the principal and teachers, allowing children to transfer to another school, allowing parents to create a charter school, and possibly closing the school.

Phil Dunmeyer, principal at Beswick Elementary, which is one of Tustin's low-scoring schools, said the state's offer of extra money to improve a school is worth the risk of losing control.

"My goodness gracious, I'd volunteer for that," said Dunmeyer, principal of the school for seven years. "I'm sure my district will hold me accountable for school improvement far sooner than the state would anyway. "

Dunmeyer said the extra money would pay for better teacher training, after-school tutoring and classroom materials that could all focus on raising achievement.

Kathi Jo Brunning, a mother of students at Santa Ana High and Willard Intermediate, two Santa Ana schools with low test scores, said the crucial question is how strict the state will be with spending guidelines for the school improvement money.

"Parents and teachers know what their kids need most because they're closest to them. So I think they're the ones who should determine what kids' needs are," she said. "Throwing money at the problem might not be the answer, unless you can use it to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes."

DAVIS PLAN FOR HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM PASSES KEY TEST

The Sacramento Bee, February 11, 1999
By: Jon Matthews and Patrick Hoge, Bee Capitol Bureau
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California moved a key step closer Wednesday to requiring that all high school students pass an exit exam before they are allowed to graduate.

The sweeping plan for testing, part of Gov. Gray Davis' agenda for reforming public schools, received a stamp of approval from the state Senate Education Committee. The vote came after the ad ministration agreed to numerous amendments, including a requirement that most students begin taking -- and trying to pass -- the test in 10th grade.

The testing bill, SB 2x, cleared the committee on a bipartisan 9-0 vote, although several Republican and Democratic senators abstained. The measure, which now goes to the Senate Appropriations Committee, would start the mandatory English and math exam with the 2003 graduating class.

SB 2x is one of four Davis-sponsored bills intended to improve reading skills and hold teachers, principals and students more accountable. The Assembly Education Committee on Wednesday approved another of the bills, AB 1x, which reflects Davis' $ 100 million plan to have teachers evaluate and assist new and underperforming teachers.

With lawmakers acknowledging the teacher bill is still a work in progress, that measure, carried by Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, D-Los Angeles, passed 12-2. Democrats voted in favor, though some voiced serious concerns.

Republican Assemblymen Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield, and Steve Baldwin, R-El Cajon, were opposed. Five Republicans abstained, including some who wanted provisions to speed up the termination of bad teachers. The next stop for the bill is the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Wednesday's hearings were part of the Legislature's special session on education, which is running at the same time as the regular session.

Gary Hart, Davis' education secretary, said the Democratic governor is spending "a significant amount of time" personally talking to legislators and working on amendments to the measures.

"This is heavy lifting. This isn't easy work. But we're pleased by the vote on the exit exam. Many people have suggested that the high school exit exam is the most difficult measure, and the bill is moving," Hart said after the Senate committee vote.

A third piece of Davis' reform package, AB 2x -- a proposed $ 94 million reading improvement program -- passed the Assembly Higher Education Committee on Tuesday and will be heard next in Assembly Appropriations.

But despite the progress, not all was smooth sailing for Davis' agenda.

A Senate committee vote on the fourth Davis education proposal -- intended to rank and improve lagging schools -- was postponed at least another week Wednesday while major amendments continue to be drafted and debated. The measure, SB 1x by Sen. Deirdre Alpert, D-Coronado, would rank all schools based on an "academic performance index," calculated mostly with test scores but including graduation and attendance rates for both teachers and students. The data also would be broken down by ethnicity and poverty levels.

And numerous members of the Assembly Education Committee joined teachers' representatives in voicing strong reservations about Davis' proposal to deny cost-of-living adjustments to school districts that do not implement a peer review program for teachers.

"The COLA is a stupid idea," lobbyist Jeffrey Frost said in his testimony on behalf of the California Association of

Suburban School Districts.

Hart, however, said after the committee hearing that the cost-of-living proposal is "a very live horse."

To which Mary Bergan, president of the California Federation of Teachers, retorted: "It's a very live horse that could use a bullet."

Representatives of some civil rights and minority groups voiced objections or concerns about the proposed exit exam, questioning whether it was fair to make all high school students pass the same test beginning in 2003, regardless of the quality of the schools they attend.

"It is simply not appropriate to subject students to an exit exam before we have given them 12 years of a high-quality education," said John Affeldt, a lawyer representing a coalition of educators and civil rights advocates.

But the measure's author, Sen. Jack O'Connell, D-San Luis Obispo, announced a long list of amendments, including requiring that most students begin taking the test in the 10th grade -- allowing students who need extra help to be identified -- but allowing English learners to defer that deadline for up to two years.

Other amendments would let ninth-graders begin taking the exam, give the state superintendent of schools and state Board of Education an extra three months to develop the test, require the adoption of standards for students with special needs, ensure that the exam reflects what is actually being taught in the schools, monitor the results of the testing program, and require supplemental instruction for any pupil who does not demonstrate sufficient progress toward passing the exam.

While it was clear that more changes to the testing plan may yet be made, many senators and witnesses lauded the amendments. "We, too, agree that the amendments make this a much better bill," said Joe Nunez, representing the California Teachers Association.

Business groups also voiced strong support for the overall testing plan.

But some Republican senators abstained, saying they had not been given adequate time to study the amendments.

Sen. Tom Hayden, D-Los Angeles, also abstained, voicing concerns that not enough money was being promised to help lagging students.

PR99:040
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 17, 1999

CONTACT: Michael Bustamante
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GOVERNOR DAVIS CHALLENGES MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO SET NEW ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Calls Fern Bacon's 8th Graders, "The pioneering class of 2003!"

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gray Davis today called on students from Fern Bacon Middle School to meet the challenge of passing a high school exit exam in 2003. The students will be among an estimated 600,000 eighth grade students who will be required to take the exam to graduate high school under legislation proposed by the governor.

"There are plenty of naysayers who've predicted that our students won't be ready by 2003 to take a tough test. Well, I say they're wrong," said Governor Davis. "These eighth grade students will rise to the challenge and lead California in the 21st century."

Governor Davis was joined by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley to participate in a round table discussion on education with parents, teachers and students. Fern Bacon Elementary School has implemented various programs to accelerate students' reading skills and has instituted a new phonics based reading program called "LANGUAGE!"

The governor's exit exam proposal is being carried by Senator Jack O'Connell (D-Santa Barbara). SB 2X ensures that every student who graduates from high school can demonstrate high school-level competency in reading, writing and mathematics.

"It's time to ensure that a diploma from a California high school is a valued asset," continued Governor Davis.

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The Sacramento Bee, February 8, 1999
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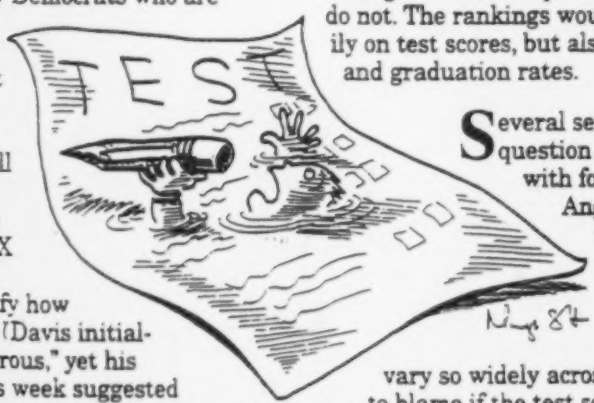
OPINION

No free ride

Education proposals get needed scrutiny

A Democrat is elected governor of California for the first time in 16 years. He stakes his gubernatorial reputation on the success of education reforms, and calls the Legislature – held by his own party – into special session to consider them. For Gov. Gray Davis, it would seem to be a political slam dunk in the making.

Not quite so, if Wednesday's meeting of the Senate Education Committee was any indicator. And it's the majority Democrats who are asking most of the tough questions – and, in many cases, the right ones.



Scott - Newsart

Davis proposes a new exit examination that all high schoolers, by the year 2003, must pass to graduate. His bill, SB 2X carried by Sen. Jack O'Connell, doesn't specify how difficult the test will be (Davis initially said it would be "rigorous," yet his education secretary this week suggested it will be a "standard that is attainable to all students"). It isn't yet clear whether all students – including those with learning disabilities or difficulty speaking English – will have to take it.

Several senators wanted to know exactly what kind of remediation would be offered to students who fail, and what would be done to ensure that the test doesn't increase the dropout rate. Sen. Richard Alarcon pointed out that "a test does not teach," and said it would be fruitless to establish a graduation test unless the resources – better teachers, more help for students who need it – are in place to help them pass it. Sen. Tom Hayden commented, "If everybody can pass it, then it's not clear what it's for."

The other bill heard by the education committee, SB 1X carried by Sen. Dede Alpert, would establish a ranking system for the state's 7,900 schools and a system of monetary rewards for those that improve and punishments, possibly including school closure or reassignment of the principal, for those that do not. The rankings would be based primarily on test scores, but also on attendance and graduation rates.

Several senators echoed the question – posed to them with force by a Los Angeles middle school teacher – of how accountability measures can be imposed equitably on schools that vary so widely across the state. Who is to blame if the test scores don't improve in classrooms where only a fraction of the students stay for a whole year and where few students speak English well? Are principals, who due to union contracts in some districts have little control over their teaching roster, always responsible?

In the case of both bills, the administration seems amenable to addressing the senators' concerns before a final vote. It is in the writing of those amendments – the all-important details – that the worth of the governor's reforms will be measured. The Legislature, and the schools, await them eagerly.

BEWARE THE "ERA OF HIGHER EXPECTATIONS"

The Sacramento Bee, January 24, 1999

By: Mark Baldassare

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In his state of the state address on Jan. 7, Gov. Gray Davis told Californians to prepare themselves for an "era of higher expectations." He also made it very clear that the major triumph of this new era would be a significant improvement in the state's underachieving public school system.

For someone who got to the governor's office by convincing voters that he is a careful and deliberate politician, Davis certainly seems to have thrown caution to the wind. After all, for the state's top elected official to link his political fate to the turnaround of a complicated public school system is a truly bold and daring - if not potentially self-defeating - move.

Making good on his promise to hit the ground running, Davis called the Legislature into a special session on education last Tuesday. The aim of this session is to quickly pass a package of school reform bills and then send them to the governor's desk for speedy approval and implementation. While Sacramento buzzes with activity and optimism, it is perhaps a good time for a reality check on what the public expects from their new governor and the Legislature, and what voters are likely to do next if they don't get what they want.

A new Statewide Survey by the Public Policy Institute of California shows Californians are in remarkable consensus about the need to improve K-12 public education. No other state issue -- not crime, immigration, the economy, taxes, traffic, environmental pollution or health care reform -- ranks anywhere close in importance to reforming the state's public schools.

Moreover, the public is undeterred by any talk of a looming state budget deficit in their quest for better schools. Roughly nine in 10 residents say that K-12 public education spending should be given the highest priority, even if the state government has to reduce other spending this year. Fewer Californians place such high importance on the major spending categories in the state budget -- higher education, public health and welfare, and prisons.

So, Californians will not take a shortfall of funds as an excuse for not making improvements on the schools; instead, they would want their elected officials to reorder the state government's fiscal priorities, even though state law and federal mandates leave them little discretion to do so.

When we asked why schools are not performing as well as they could, Californians had a number of ideas. At the top of the list were teachers, mentioned by one in five residents. About 10 percent named the lack of state funding, overcrowded classrooms and lack of involvement by parents. Fewer than 5 percent said the fault lies with a lack of standards and testing, curriculum and books, or with the failure of local school bond measures. Surprisingly, only 2 percent said that non-English speaking students are to blame for poor school performance.

The public today feels strongly about a variety of school reforms, some of which Davis has advocated. More than eight in 10 want to increase teachers' pay based on merit, in order to attract and retain the best teachers. A similar number want to require teachers to be given more training and meet tougher credential standards before they enter the classroom. Eight in 10 also want to reduce class sizes to a maximum of 20 students from the kindergarten through the sixth grade, extending a popular program that now applies only through the third grade. Eighty-eight percent want the state to raise standards for learning and require that students pass achievement tests before they are promoted to the next grade.

But while Californians this year seem to want it all in terms of school reform, they have deep doubts that the governor and Legislature can actually deliver on any of it. For instance, only 11 percent have a "great deal" of confidence in the ability of the governor and state Legislature to solve the state's most important problems. Six in 10 have "only some" confidence in their state's leaders, while three in 10 have very little or no confidence.

Two thirds see the state government as "pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves," while only three in 10 see it as "run for the benefit of all of the people." More than half think that state government wastes "a lot" of the money collected in taxes, while four in 10 say it wastes some money and only 5 percent say it doesn't waste very much.

There are obviously many skeptics out there when it comes to the new governor's promise of an "era of higher

expectations." So, how is the public likely to respond to talk of education reforms this year?

First and foremost, with disbelief. They expect the governor and state Legislature to get bogged down in the details, cave in to special interests and end up in gridlock. That's their image of how state government works. If a legislative agenda actually comes to fruition, voters will want concrete proof that these government actions are having immediate results.

That makes this is a time of political danger for Davis and the Democratic-controlled Legislature as they begin to grapple with school reform. They have already complicated the process by creating expectations that will be hard to fulfill right away.

Before it is too late, Davis has to change the nature of the conversation about school reform. He needs to focus on creating more realistic expectations for school improvements, including creating a time schedule, setting short-term goals and making people aware of the progress along the way toward the ambitious goal of having among the best schools in the nation. Otherwise, he risks facing the consequences of creating expectations that may not be immediately attainable.

For one thing, big institutions such as public schools do not change overnight. The public must understand that it may be years before laws passed today have any significant effect on the quality of education at the local level. In fact, changes in this year's test scores may better reflect actions taken by former Gov. Pete Wilson in previous years than the proposals that are implemented by the new administration.

Further, student achievement test scores will not necessarily show large, across-the-board gains as a result of school reforms, and the public must learn to view these achievement tests with great caution.

For instance, in neighborhoods with growing concentrations of non-English speaking immigrants and poor children, there will continue to be downward pressure on student scores. School reforms do nothing to address the growing gap between the wealthy and poor that is reflected in many underachieving local schools. There is no reason to expect scores in truly disadvantaged areas to get significantly higher until the parents of school children in those areas move into the economic mainstream.

If Californians are not carefully led through the school reform process, and told to expect smaller short-term gains in advance of truly remarkable changes, the public could easily become disappointed and frustrated by the end of 1999. In California, this frustration has a tendency to play itself out through the initiative process.

In fact, 75 percent of Californians in our latest survey said that they think the best way to address state problems is to bring initiatives to the ballot box and pass them. Only one in five said the best way to solve problems is to have the governor and state Legislature decide what to do and pass laws, which is the route we are now taking with the special legislative session. By as soon as the 2000 election, voters could be angry enough to send a message to Sacramento by supporting ballot initiatives that would bring about more drastic changes in the state's schools, such as vouchers, expanding charter schools, tougher teacher credentials, greater accountability for local school officials and required funding for extending class size-reductions up through the higher grades.

Davis is off to an excellent start with the proposals he has offered for school reform. He enjoys broad public support for his ideas, and these efforts are likely to make a difference in due time. At the State of the State address, Davis made his point about increasing local school accountability by saying, "When an NFL coach has one losing season after another, he gets replaced. Period. End of the Story."

California voters are likely to show the same kind of loyalty to their state's elected officials if they can't clear the bar they have set for improvements to public education. If Davis creates impossible dreams, and doesn't demonstrate steady progress, then he could pay the price at the ballot box. After all, only a little more than half of Californians in our recent survey have even bothered to learn the name of their new governor.

Mark Baldassare is a Senior Fellow and Survey Director of the PPIC Statewide Survey at the Public Policy Institute of California in San Francisco.

PANEL BACKS DAVIS' PLAN ON EDUCATION; ASSEMBLY: PROPOSAL FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHERS IS APPROVED 12 TO 2. BUT PARTISAN VOTE SEEMS TO INDICATE HONEYMOON IS OVER.

The Los Angeles Times, February 11, 1999

By: Amy Pyle, Times Staff Writer

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The most controversial piece of Gov. Gray Davis' $444-million education plan--a proposal for teachers to evaluate their peers--received its first legislative approval Wednesday.

But the bipartisan honeymoon that last week greeted Davis' proposal for increasing reading instruction was over. The Peer Assistance and Review bill passed the Assembly Education Committee on a partisan 12-2 vote Wednesday, with two Republicans voting no and the rest abstaining.

Committee Co-Chairman Bill Campbell (R-Villa Park) said he could not back the bill because its sanctions on school districts that do not cooperate are too great and its consequences for poor teachers too little--there is no provision for firing them.

"When we get through the process and some teachers haven't improved, this bill has nothing to move them into a different career," Campbell said.

Davis spokesman Michael Bustamante said he was not concerned about the change of tone from last week, when the governor's reading improvement bill received unanimous bipartisan support. "I think before the end of the process we'll see Republicans starting to support the legislation," he said.

The peer review bill calls for spending $ 100 million annually to allow districts to develop and run teacher evaluation programs in which veteran teachers would assess and advise teachers who have received an unsatisfactory review from their principals.

Although the bill allows local districts to negotiate their programs' parameters with teachers' unions, it threatens to withhold annual cost-of-living increases from districts that do not participate. That is where much of the opposition arose from legislators and education lobbyists alike.

Forcing districts to comply ignores the fact that the most commonly cited peer review successes--in New York, Ohio and Poway, Calif.--were all voluntary, said California Federation of Teachers President Mary Bergan. "That's why they were successful," she said.

Although agreeing to consider other incentives as the bill moves on to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, bill author and Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa (D-Los Angeles) said he considers a financial punishment essential to gaining statewide compliance.

"I know there's a lot of concern but there's a competing concern: How do we motivate school districts to get involved, to grasp... this reform?" he said.

As the weeks until the hoped-for March special session deadline fly by, the other three Davis administration bills also are progressing.

In the state Senate on Wednesday, a high school exit exam received the 9-0 approval of the upper house's Education Committee after it was dramatically amended.

Among the changes made Wednesday, the exam for the Class of 2003 would test only mathematics and language arts.

Tenth-graders would be required to take the test and ninth-graders could opt to take it--a change designed to create an early warning system so schools can address shortcomings.

Legislators also made it clear they want money allocated for remedial help for those poorly performing students, but so far none is included in the bill.

Sen. Byron Sher (D-Stanford) said legislators should "understand that by voting on the bill, we are making a resource commitment" that is not currently included in Davis' proposal.

In another change, students who enter high school not speaking English could delay taking the test for two years--which in some cases would mean taking the test after finishing their senior year, if they wanted to receive a diploma.

But some opposition lingered. Sen. Tom Hayden (D-Los Angeles) said the bill contains inadequate acknowledgment that students in poor neighborhoods tend to receive substandard education.

"It is simply not appropriate to give kids an exit exam before we have given them 12 years of a quality education," said John Affeldt, an attorney representing numerous groups including the Assn. of Mexican American Educators.

Hayden and civil rights advocates who spoke at the hearing pressed for an intensive evaluation of the exam results to ensure that it is not disproportionately failing some socioeconomic and ethnic groups. "There's plenty of evidence that you do this this way and it results in dropouts, and that results in lawsuits," Hayden said.

The exam bill goes next to the Senate Appropriations Committee, possibly next week.

A bill on school accountability was held over for a vote until next Wednesday, but it too contained major changes in response to concerns of legislators and education lobbyists.

Most significantly, the bill is moving away from holding principals solely responsible for a failing school. Instead, the bill proposes that a team of experts would determine who was responsible for the problem, potentially including the district superintendent of schools and the school board.

When Davis unveiled his accountability bill, he said principals should be treated as "the CEOs" of schools and evaluated as they would be in the business world.

And to address concerns that more was being spent on rewarding good schools than on helping troubled ones, the amendments shift $25 million into intervention. But the totals remained unbalanced: $67.8 million for intervention at failing schools and $125 million for the Governor's Performance Awards at top achieving schools.

The governor's $94-million reading improvement bill, which would provide remedial programs for children and training for teachers, cleared the Senate Higher Education Committee on Tuesday, but not without a significant glitch.

A representative from the University of California said it is unrealistic to assume the system can raise the $4 million a year it would cost to train 400 teachers and 400 principals.

"We agree that the ideas are very good," said Stephen Arditti, assistant vice president for governmental relations. "But this is an investment for society, not just for the university."

The reading bill also goes next to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you have expectations about your own abilities? Where did they come from? What might cause those expectations to change?

2. Where in your school do you feel that expectations are too low? Too high?

3. If you could decide how to improve public education in California, how would you go about "raising the bar"? Or, do you think the "bar" is too high for some?

4. If we compare the earnings of high school graduates with the earnings of those who do not graduate from high school, it is clear that a high school diploma is economically valuable. How can a diploma be made more valuable?

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Standards and Accountability

Section II
Standards and Accountability
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Standards and Accountability

It is a part of our public life that we must meet standards. To drive a car, we have to meet certain standards of age, physical fitness, knowledge of road rules and driving skill. We count on our food and water meeting certain standards of purity and freshness. Most standards exist to protect us.

Raising educational standards is not the same as raising earthquake standards for buildings. Unlike concrete and steel girders, students are not all alike. It is relatively easy to determine what sort of stress building materials must be able to sustain in an earthquake. A student with a high test score does not necessarily indicate he or she has met the academic standard. And, if a student has high test anxiety or has not been taught how to take a test, a low test score does not necessarily mean he or she has not met the standard.

The articles that follow address many of the problems concerning educational standards and the tests designed to assess students. Critics raise questions about fairness, narrow standards, and the usefulness of tests. The last article raises questions about standards themselves and invites you to look at education in a different way. Now you can begin to consider the issues behind "raising the bar."

~Current Session Legislation~

ABX1 36 Teachers.

BILL NUMBER: ABX1 36 INTRODUCED 02/08/99

INTRODUCED BY Assembly Member Davis

FEBRUARY 8, 1999

An act to amend Sections 44279.1 and 44929.21 of the Education Code, relating to teachers.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 36, as introduced, Davis. Teachers.

Under existing law, there is the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System, administered jointly by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Existing law requires the commission and the superintendent to approve the most cost-effective programs of support and assessment, to ensure that programs meet the Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment, and that local programs support beginning teachers in meeting the competencies described in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

Under existing law, participation in the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System is voluntary for teachers, school districts, and county offices of education and participation by certificated employees may not be made a condition of employment.

This bill would require participation in the system or in a substantially equivalent system for teachers, school districts, and county offices of education and would make participation by certificated employees a condition of employment, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program. This bill would allow the governing board of a school district or a county office of education to petition the State Board of Education to waive these requirements.

This bill would express the intent of the Legislature to encourage the State Board of Education and the governing boards of school districts to review and consider the performance based teacher assessment methodology of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a model for local district evaluation standards and procedures.

Under existing law, an employee of a school district of any type or class having an average daily attendance of 250 or more who, after employment for 2 complete consecutive school years in a position or positions requiring certification qualifications, is reelected for the next succeeding school year to a position requiring certification qualifications is classified as, and becomes a permanent employee of the district at the commencement of the succeeding school year.

This bill would instead require an employee employed on and after the 2000-01 fiscal year to be employed for 4 years prior to becoming a permanent employee, but would allow a district to classify an employee as a permanent employee of the district in fewer than 4 years.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed $1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed $1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

(For complete text of bill go to: **http://www.senate.ca.gov** click on legislation)

~Current Session Legislation~

AB 25 Education: school accountability.

BILL NUMBER: AB 25 INTRODUCED 12/07/98

INTRODUCED BY Assembly Member Mazzoni

DECEMBER 7, 1998

An act to add Chapter 6.1 (commencing with Section 52050) to Part 28 of the Education Code, relating to school accountability, making an appropriation therefor, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 25, as introduced, Mazzoni. Education: school accountability.

Existing law requires the State Board of Education to adopt statewide academically rigorous content and performance standards. Existing law requires each school district, charter school, and county office of education to administer to each of its pupils in grades 2 to 11, inclusive, an achievement test designated by the State Board of Education.

This bill would enact the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999, which would consist of an immediate short-term voluntary intervention program and a long-term public schools accountability system, and would state legislative findings, declarations, and intent in that regard.

This bill would require, for purposes of the short-term intervention program, the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify, and the State Board of Education to approve, low-performing schools. The superintendent would be required to recommend, and the board to approve, a process by which a school district would apply on behalf of a low-performing school for its assignment to a short-term voluntary intervention program.

This bill would require the governing board of a school district having jurisdiction over a school identified as low performing to appoint an external evaluator to assist in identifying the underlying causes of low performance by pupils in that school.

This bill would require a school selected for assignment to the short-term voluntary intervention program to develop, in consultation with an academic advisor appointed by the superintendent of the school district, a 2-year school action plan that focuses on how the school intends to raise the academic achievement level of pupils enrolled in the school. Following approval by the governing board of the school district, the school action plan would be required to be made available to parents or guardians of pupils and to the community upon request.

This bill would require the state to provide funding on the basis of average daily attendance to a school district for schools selected to participate in the short-term voluntary intervention program.
This bill would require each school district with schools participating in the short-term voluntary intervention program to evaluate the impact, costs, and benefits of the intervention program as they relate to the school district and the schools under its jurisdiction that are participating in the program. The bill would also require the State Department of Education to contract with an independent evaluator to prepare a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation, impact, costs, and benefits of the statewide short-term voluntary intervention program.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to create a long-term public school accountability system and would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to recommend, and the State Board of Education to adopt, such a system no later than January 1, 2001. The bill would provide that the long-term public school accountability system would be based on state academic content and performance standards and assessments and include a school performance index that reflects the percentages of pupils performing at various levels on multiple measures. The bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to consult with an ongoing technical advisory committee in computing the school performance index. The long-term program would focus on gains in pupil achievement by setting targets for school improvement. The bill would authorize the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to adopt a process whereby various sanctions could be applied to a school that does not achieve certain growth targets for pupil achievement, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program.

This bill would appropriate $50,000,000 from the General Fund to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of this act and provide that $500,000 of the funds so appropriated be allocated to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to carry out the state operations and evaluation requirements of that act. To the extent that the funds appropriated by this bill are allocated to a school district or a community college district, those funds would be applied toward the minimum funding requirements for school districts and community college districts imposed by Section 8 of Article XVI of the California Constitution.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed $1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed $1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions. This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: 2/3. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

(For complete text of bill go to: http://www.senate.ca.gov, click on legislation)

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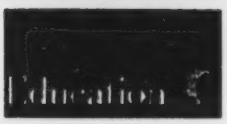

Go to California's report card.

California: Heavy Lifting Ahead

by Robert C. Johnston

The past year was a hectic one for education in California, where policymakers and voters joined forces to enact new accountability measures, curtail bilingual education, and approve record-high school construction funding.

Vital Statistics	
999	Public school districts
7,981	Public schools
5.6 million	K-12 enrollment
60.5%	Minority students
25%	Children in poverty
10.5%	Students with disabilities
$32.7 billion	Annual K-12 expenditures *(all revenue sources)*

But more heavy lifting is likely this year. Grade-level performance goals have not yet been set for the state's new academic standards. And lawmakers hope to make schools and teachers more accountable for student success.

"We were unable to get a bill to hold schools accountable," says Democratic Assemblywoman Kerry Mazzoni, who chaired the education committee in the legislature's lower house last year. "The first thing on the governor's agenda will be to get a bill on the table and signed."

California made extensive progress on standards in 1998, but it has more work to do.

One of the biggest developments last year was the completion of learning standards for Golden State students.

After extensive debate, the state school board approved standards in October in science, history, and social sciences, giving the state a complete set of academic standards. Mathematics and language arts standards were adopted in 1997.

And, while applying the standards will be voluntary for school districts, mandatory state assessments are being prepared to gauge how well students learn the material.

Last year, shortly after the final standards package hit the streets, it was getting strong reviews from outside the state.

"They took a careful look at what was being done in other states and countries, and tried to take the best and then improve on it," says Matt

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Gandal, the director of standards and assessment for Achieve Inc., a nonprofit Cambridge, Mass., organization created by governors and business leaders to push for higher academic standards.

Adds Gandal: "You're already seeing people point to California as having one of the best sets of state standards."

As the state aligns its curriculum frameworks and assessments to match the standards, California students will continue to take the Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition, an off-the-shelf test that was administered there for the first time in the spring of 1998 in grades 2-11.

The test was championed by two-term Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, who was barred by law from seeking another term in office in last fall's elections. It was controversial because it was administered in English to all students, including those with limited English skills.

California students, excluding those with limited proficiency in English, performed at or below the national average in most grades and categories on the Stanford-9. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin says the results "establish a baseline for how well our students are learning basic academic skills, and the scores indicate that California students are coming back."

Not everybody read the results the same way, however.

"How can you reasonably hold people accountable based on those results?" asks Joan McRobbie, the spokeswoman for WestEd, a federally funded policy-research laboratory in San Francisco. "It's a norm-referenced test that's not aligned with state standards."

Along with Wilson, state legislators also spent much of last year toiling over education policy with implications for years to come.

As part of the outgoing governor's school accountability push, a law was enacted requiring districts to end social promotion, or the practice of moving students to the next grade before they're academically ready. The law, which takes effect this year, seeks to link promotion to state tests, although districts can set their own criteria. In a bow to local flexibility, teachers can override, with a written explanation, a retention decision.

"This is very big," Mazzoni says. "All districts must have a policy based on the premise that no student will pass to the next grade unless they are at or reasonably near grade level."

The student-accountability package included $105 million in new money for summer school, tutorials, and other remediation programs.

But some say the legislature's work on accountability will not be done until a companion package is passed that targets schools and teachers.

"It's inappropriate to hold kids accountable for school systems which, sometimes, are not that good. We can't allow that," Mazzoni argues.

On the budget front for fiscal 1999, the legislators approved spending $250 million to help schools buy textbooks aligned with the new standards. Another $195 million in new spending was appropriated to lengthen the school year to 180 instructional days, up from a minimum of 172 days. And $1.5 billion was allotted to support class-size-reduction efforts in grades K-3 and in 9th grade, up from about $1 billion the year before.

The state government's 1999 budget raised state K-12 spending to $31.3 billion from $29.2 billion the previous year--a gain of nearly 7.2 percent.

Voters also got in on the policy action last year. In June, Californians approved Proposition 227, a state constitutional amendment that aimed to virtually eliminate bilingual education programs in the state. Under the new law, most public school students who are learning to speak English must be taught primarily in English.

After surviving legal challenges, the measure went into effect last fall under a cloud of confusion over what was acceptable instruction for limited-English-proficient pupils. In addition, thousands of parents sought waivers to keep their children in traditional bilingual classes.

"People are really struggling with it because it's so unclear," McRobbie of WestEd says. "There's no data yet on what's happening in the class."

California voters also turned a generous hand to the state's nearly 8,000 public schools by approving a $9.2 billion statewide education construction bond in November. Over the next four years, the bond will generate $6.7 billion, mostly in matching dollars, for K-12 schools. The remaining $2.5 billion will be set aside for higher education.

The elections also presaged a windfall for the state's youngest residents as voters passed a 50-cent-a-pack tax on cigarettes to pay for local early-childhood-education and -welfare programs. The measure, which was championed by filmmaker Rob Reiner, is expected to raise up to $700 million a year.

Perhaps most significant, at least from a policy standpoint, was the election of California's first Democratic governor in 16 years. Gray Davis, who served as lieutenant governor under Wilson, handily defeated the state's Republican attorney general, Daniel E. Lungren.

The partisan shift is important, in large part, because both chambers of the legislature and the governorship are now in the hands of the same party. That could make it easier to write and pass legislation generally and to draft bills that are more to the liking of teachers' unions and most other education groups.

And observers expect less bickering between state schools chief Eastin and the Democratic governor. Eastin, a registered Democrat and former state lawmaker who was re-elected to the nonpartisan post in November, spent much of her first term ensnared in a power struggle with Wilson and the state board, which he appointed.

Californians may be ready for a break from upheaval.

"There was just one big thing after another," Michael W. Kirst, the co-director of Policy Analysis for California Education, a university-based research consortium, says of the past year. "Districts want the state to stay quiet for a while. It's been just a tumultuous period."

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Commentary

Education's High-Stakes Gamble

By Ronald A. Wolk

"I have about 30 kids in my U.S. history class. They come from nine different countries; most of them can't read. Even if they can read the text, they don't know what it means. How am I supposed to teach U.S. history to kids who can't read? I could come in here every day for 20 years and still not figure out how to do it."

--A Boston high school teacher

How will parents and the public react when public schools fail large numbers of students and deny seniors graduation on the basis of a test score?

DELL

Read our Commentaries, "Four Reasons Why Most 'Don't Cut the Mustard,'" and "Don't Be Confused by the Rankings; Focus on Results," Nov. 11, 1998.

Standards-based school reform--the strategy of choice in the United States--is on a collision course with reality.

Forty-nine states and a number of urban districts have set standards for what students should know and be able to do at various points in their school careers. Half the states hold schools accountable and apply sanctions to those whose students fail to meet the standards. At least a third--with more soon to follow--require students to score at designated levels on tests to get promoted and/or graduate.

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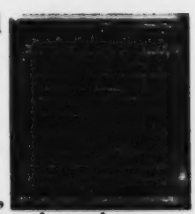
This fall, for example, Boston adopted a new student-promotion policy designed to end social promotion. The policy spells out in detail "what courses students must take, what projects and papers they must complete, and what tests they must pass in order to be promoted or to graduate." The requirements are formidable even for kids who can read. New York state has toughened its already tough regents' exam, and students must pass it to get a diploma.

So what's wrong with raising standards? Isn't that what policymakers and the public have been clamoring for?



The problem is that an immediate and across-the-board implementation of new high standards and high-stakes exams ignores reality. A great many high school and middle school students, especially in urban districts, cannot read well enough to pass these tougher courses and tests. Nationally, more than half our urban 4th graders score below "basic" on national reading exams, which means they will have trouble doing grade-level work as they enter middle school. In Maryland, New Jersey, and Louisiana, more than 70 percent of the urban 4th graders are reading below basic. These children tend to fall steadily behind; many eventually drop out. Of

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those who stay the course and graduate, a significant number cannot succeed in college or a job without remediation.

Some say proficiency levels are too high on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. But even on exams like the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition, which many big-city districts rely on, as many as half of urban students are reading below grade level. In three out of four Chicago schools, at least half the students read below grade level. In Boston, nearly 40 percent of 11th graders score below basic in reading on the Stanford-9, and 75 percent score below basic in math. In Philadelphia, 65 percent are below the basic level in reading and 85 percent below basic in math. The story is the same in virtually every major urban district.

For tens of thousands of urban youngsters, it's a kind of double jeopardy: The system failed to educate them adequately, and now it punishes them for not being educated.

These kids have not been exposed to the high standards, highly trained teachers, and rich curriculum that the standards-based reform promises--and must deliver if it is to succeed. Some states are determined to hold students accountable even though most teachers haven't been prepared to teach to high standards and won't be for years to come. The standards themselves are still in the "beta" phase in many states and districts, and their authors don't yet know whether they are too rigorous or rigorous enough, too general or too specific. The states and districts are producing vastly different standards, assessments, and accountability systems, which can only cause problems for the many families who move across state lines.

States and districts should indeed set clear and rigorous standards. And they should hold schools and the adults in them accountable for educating their students to meet these standards. But until the schools demonstrate the capacity to provide an adequate education, high-stakes consequences for students, at least in big cities, are unjust. When schools can teach the great majority of children to read successfully by the 4th grade, then we can hold those 4th graders accountable for meeting high academic standards as they move through middle school and high school.

Until then, the highest priority for urban middle school and high school students is to teach them to read and write. They should continue to have access to courses in history, math, literature, and the arts, but the intense and persistent focus should be on reading. Getting most high school students to read at or above grade level is in itself an enormous challenge. America's public schools don't really teach reading after elementary school; teachers in middle schools and high schools don't know how to teach adolescents to read.

I can hear it now: "You want to water down standards for poor kids, immigrants, African-Americans, and Hispanics."

No! I want to use the last chance we may have to give them the tools

they will need--reading and writing--to continue their educations. If that at least can be accomplished, there is hope that they may eventually get the education the system failed to provide them.

The late Albert Shanker, the longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers, foresaw this potential crisis. He was an ardent supporter of standards, but he often wondered aloud whether it was realistic to hold all youngsters to a single standard. He used to ask: How will parents and the public react when public schools fail large numbers of students and deny seniors graduation on the basis of a test score?

If high stakes are attached and enforced prematurely, failing students will pile up at the exits like steam building in a boiler. In the face of such pressure, the public education system will surely compromise, perhaps by lowering standards or the cutoff scores for passing. As a result, standards-based reform will suffer a serious setback and loss of credibility.

Ronald A. Wolk, the former editor of *Education Week* , now chairs the board of trustees of its publisher, Editorial Projects in Education Inc. The views expressed are his own.

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HURDLE TO SCHOOL REFORMS

The Sacramento Bee, January 10, 1999
By: Deb Kollars, Bee Staff Writer
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On its face, bringing strict accountability to California's public schools sounds so simple and seems so reasonable.

Set the standards. Test the kids. If achievement is high, reward the schools. If achievement is lousy, penalize them until things improve.

But making true school accountability happen -- one of Gov. Gray Davis' stated priorities as he takes over the state -- promises to be one of the toughest, yet most important reforms he could bring to California's education scene.

"Accountability is exceedingly difficult in every place, and it takes a long time," said James W. Guthrie, director of the Peabody Center for Education Policy at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

"But it is the key missing piece in the picture. I'm not saying we don't need better teachers or more technology or more staff development. We do need those things. But without accountability, nothing else really matters."

Education reform was the centerpiece of Davis' election campaign last fall and of his State of the State address on Wednesday. His first state budget, released Friday, proposed $444 million worth of new education initiatives aimed at boosting reading, training teachers, expanding summer schools and other improvements.

Key among the new governor's proposals is his plan to promote greater accountability through a system of sanctions and incentives tied directly to the performance of students. Among his new goals: requiring high school seniors to pass a tough exit exam before graduating.

"Accountability must not be just another buzzword. It must have real meaning in the real world. Our children deserve no less," Davis said in his State of the State speech.

In coming weeks, in a special legislative session devoted to education reform, state lawmakers will tackle the complicated matter of putting accountability measures into practice. In a state with more than 5 million students, 8,000 schools, lagging test scores and a long history of independence on the part of local education agencies, it won't be easy.

But some of the groundwork is already in place.

In an agonizing process that spanned the past two years, a state advisory commission created -- and the state Board of Education approved -- a set of rigorous academic standards for grades kindergarten through 12th in math, language arts, science and history/social science.

The standards are voluntary for local districts. But the state is in the process of aligning its new statewide testing system, which is mandatory, with the standards -- meaning districts eventually will be measured by how well they do on the new guidelines.

And in late 1997, a task force of school and business leaders released a report outlining a proposed accountability system of sanctions and rewards for California schools. The statewide commission was convened by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin. Last year, the Legislature passed a bill embodying many of the task force's recommendations, but former Gov. Pete Wilson vetoed it.

Eastin, who was re-elected in November, has said accountability is her highest priority for her second term. And now, with a new governor dedicated to the same, the commission's report likely will become a guiding document during the upcoming legislative session, said Richard Whitmore, chief deputy superintendent for the state Department of Education.

"For us, this is topic A," Whitmore said. "The Legislature is ready to go. The department is ready to go. The governor is ready to go."

The task force proposals, if implemented, would encourage more accountability on the part of students and their families, as well as educators charged with instructing children.

At the student level, the report recommended that the

state require that students pass entrance exams to get into middle and high school and that they meet or exceed specified performance levels in order to graduate.

High-performing students would be rewarded with scholarships and guaranteed admission to state universities. Summer school would be required for students who fail to meet grade-level standards.

At the school level, the commission envisioned a rating system that would label schools based on how well their students do on statewide tests. Every school would be required, over a 10-year period, to get 90 percent of its students to meet or exceed grade level standards as measured by the test. Each year, the state would reward or sanction schools, based on whether they met short-term growth targets toward that goal.

Top-performing schools would get cash rewards. Low-performing schools would be subjected to a three-tiered intervention program that would begin with academic assistance and could end, after four years of continued poor performance, in a state takeover.

Whitmore said a variety of strategies could be employed to improve achievement, such as retraining teachers, replacing principals or teachers, recalling school boards, or shutting down a campus altogether.

"Different sanctions may make sense in different situations," he said.

Guthrie, who spent years as an education professor and researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, before moving to Vanderbilt, said the most effective accountability programs are aimed at the school level, not at individual teachers.

"Ideally, a group of teachers operates as a team. For the fifth-grade teacher to succeed, the fourth-grade teacher needs to have done a good job the year before," he said. "We want to see whole schools working together, so it should be schools that receive the rewards and sanctions."

Jim Sweeney, superintendent of the Sacramento City Unified School District, is learning first-hand about the difficulties of shaping an effective accountability system. A year ago, the district announced a three-year reform plan that included a pledge to hold the system's 77 schools publicly accountable for achievement. The plan set out ambitious goals for improvement at every school. This spring, every school will be publicly identified in one of several categories ranging from "school in crisis" to "exemplary school."

However, the district has yet to determine what it will do to reward or sanction such schools. Sweeney said he is not convinced that cash rewards are the best use of the district's limited funds, and he is reluctant to "punish" schools or shut them down.

"It sounds so great, just shut the school down. But where will the kids go? Where will the teachers go?" he said. "It's really an awful process.

"My basic belief is that public accountability is very powerful. When we start publicizing the test scores . . . it will be a very powerful incentive, more so than sanctions."

Sweeney said he welcomed the governor's proposal to develop an exit exam for graduating seniors.

"It's the right idea," he said. "We need these standards. It would set the bar for everyone."

Lorraine McDonnell, a professor of political science at UC Santa Barbara, said a true system of accountability will be tough but not impossible to establish in California.

A huge problem, she said, has been the state's lack of cohesiveness in education policy over the past decade. Reading fads, statewide tests that have come and gone, feuds over math instruction, budget cuts, rifts among the state's various education power brokers -- all have contributed to "an incredibly fragmented approach."

"For accountability to happen, everyone has to be on board. And everyone has to realize that we're in this for the long haul. It's not something you can do short-term," McDonnell said.

The Sacramento Bee, January 31, 1999
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OPINION

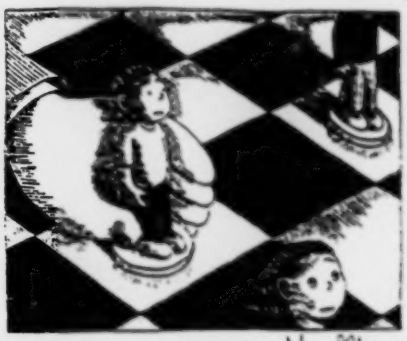
A child agenda, too

Too many California kids start a lap behind

Reforming public schools is California's public policy passion of the moment. The urgency flows from the nearly universal belief that if children learn more, they will lead fuller lives, and California tomorrow will enjoy a stronger economy and society.

That equation — learning equals a better life — is indisputable. But a narrow policy focus on school-reform risks neglecting another equation, equally true: Children with better lives learn more. Making a better future for California's next generation requires not just a school-reform agenda, but a children's agenda, too.

The data released last week by the National Survey of American Families are a reminder of how far behind the starting line many California children begin in the race to learn and thrive. Conducted by the Urban Institute to offer a baseline social snapshot of families as the nation launches upon welfare reform and a devolution of federal responsibilities to the states, the survey shows that California children start at a disadvantage to children in other states:



Scott - Newsart

- More than a quarter of California children (28 percent) live in poverty, well above the national rate of 20 percent and a larger poverty share than in such states as Alabama, Texas or Florida.
- The high number of poor California children does not stem from unusual levels of family decay or welfare dependence. Children here are no more likely to live in single-parent homes than those in the nation as a whole, and 61 percent of low-income parents are employed. What makes California distinctive is having the nation's highest rate of child poverty in two-parent households, 19 percent compared to a national rate of 11 percent.
- More than children elsewhere in America, California children go to schools bearing special burdens. A quarter of public school children are limited speakers of English. They are less likely to have a regular source of health care and 50 percent more likely, according to their parents, to be in only fair or poor health. More of them start school having been read to infrequently.

There is some good news, too. In the 1990s the level of youth violence has fallen, the percentage of infants born to mothers who've had prenatal care has risen, the state has started the Healthy Families program to make affordable health insurance available for uninsured children and voters passed Proposition 10 to support county plans for early childhood development.

But much more remains to be done. Even reformed schools can't be expected to make up all that so many of the state's children and families aren't getting in the home and the marketplace. School reform must be matched with equal energy in the public areas that touch on other parts of children's lives, and particularly of those in the bottom half.

They need good libraries and public arts to raise their sights and inspire them; recreation programs in their neighborhoods and after-school tutoring; preschool introduction to learning and English; safe neighborhoods and well-funded child protective services; improved health care. Their parents need more adult education and job training to elevate their skills and raise their incomes.

As Gov. Gray Davis has proclaimed, California won't get the most out of its next generation without setting higher expectations. But California's leaders are kidding themselves if they believe we can realize the state's human potential without also improving, at the same time, the lives and prospects of millions of its children.

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The Sacramento Bee
By: Peter Schrag
January 27, 1999
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VOICES

BEE EDITORIALS

Peter Schrag: Democrats' Republican school-reform agenda

(Published Jan. 27, 1999)

Maybe the most striking thing about the education reform proposals now being proposed by Democrats around the country, from President Clinton on down, is the extent to which they've embraced virtually the whole Republican agenda and abandoned their own.

The one major exception is vouchers, and in part the fear of vouchers is driving them to the rest of it.

Almost every major item in the new Democrat agenda comes from the conservative, whips-and-chains side of the ledger: the end of social promotion; tougher rote-and-memory-based curricula; testing with high stakes for both students and teachers. Education may be the Democrats' agenda, but it's mostly the conservative version that they're advancing.

With both Clinton at the national level, and governors such as Gray Davis, the items come straight from the polls: The public loves the hard-line stuff -- at least until it bites their own kids and things get watered down. And as we've seen in recent years in California, competition for who can propose the toughest sounding standards has become the latter-day surrogate for the tough-on-crime sentencing laws of the 1980s: You want to require algebra? I'll raise you to trigonometry and calculus.

But the most telling sign is the gradual abandonment by Democrats of the wider children's social agenda. When the nation's poor children begin school, they're already two or three years behind their more affluent peers in virtually every academic measure: Poverty is still the most powerful predictor of low test scores. Everywhere, the call is to have everyone reading competently by third grade. But where are

the programs to assure reading readiness in first grade?

The other day, Harold Howe II, former U.S. commissioner of education, and one of the nation's most respected educators, issued yet another reminder of the hard facts:

"A vast difference exists in our society between the nonschool opportunities of middle-class children," he said in a letter to the journal Education Week, "and those of children from poor families. The gap is so wide and so deep and so frightening that political leaders of both parties are loath to talk about it, let alone do anything about it. ...The more acute the poverty of students' families, the lower their test scores. Academic performance by young Americans is as dependent on their nonschool experiences as it is on the routines of schools, maybe more so. ... But the self-appointed nabobs of intensive standards-raising have had limited interest in any other corner of the maturing process."

The result is an impending crisis, in his view, in which standards-based reform and high-stakes testing collides with reality – as in many places it already has.

That's no alibi for incompetent and callous teachers, or for failing schools and dysfunctional districts, and no argument against high standards. But there is painfully little in the reform agenda that provides the additional resources – particularly the good teachers – that will enable disadvantaged kids to meet those standards. There are virtually no incentives to provide a genuinely level set of in-school opportunities for the nation's most disadvantaged kids. Very likely, to really equalize those opportunities states would have to spend substantially more for poor kids than for the middle class.

At the present, the situation tends to be precisely the reverse: It's the most underprepared and inexperienced teachers who are concentrated in the schools that serve the poorest neighborhoods. Once they get the requisite seniority, all but the most dedicated of them move to easier environments. And for all the various proposals about school accountability, both at the state and federal level, there is almost nothing that promises real improvement at the end of the line. Most of shape-up schemes now being proposed for failing schools are likely to deter, rather than attract, better people.

But the more pernicious trap is the simple assumption that it must all be done in the schools – and that the key to that is tougher tests and standards – while dangerously neglecting the broader lives of poor children.

"Most states," Howe wrote, "have recently planned and launched statewide programs for raising academic standards. Similar and related planning and action should

take place in each state for children and youths with regard to health, recreation, family support, and other nonschool aspects in the lives of young Americans." So far, not even Democrats seem very interested.

Clinton is proposing a large expansion of funding for after-school programs; Davis proposes intensive reading programs for children who need them and wants schools to pressure parents to read to their children. No one can oppose any of them. But they're hardly sufficient. In overstressed homes, where the parents themselves may barely be literate, read-to-your-kid hectoring is not likely to produce great results.

The issue here is not either-or, it's both-and. And while nonschool social programs can easily turn into squishy boondoggles, no one has yet shown the cost-effectiveness of most of our currently fashionable school reforms either. What's most troubling is that the nonschool children's issues are not even on the table. There is no equal-opportunity agenda.

It's often been said that in recent years, Clinton – and like Clinton, a "New Democrat" such as Davis – has seized the Republican program. But in the process, the Democrats have left their own concerns behind. During the campaign, Davis talked a great deal more about the death penalty than he did about poverty or welfare. But in California, where one in four kids fall below the poverty line, anyone proposing to bring all children up to some academic norm without recognizing that hard fact is dreaming.

Peter Schrag's column appears in The Bee on Wednesday. He can be reached by fax at 321-1996; or by letter at Box 15779, Sacramento, CA, 95852-0779.

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Democracy and the Arts of Schooling
By: Donald Arnstine
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2 Democracy and Education

Standards, Ideals, and the Schools

Education can succeed only if teachers know what they're teaching *for*. Their immediate aims and objectives are shaped by their values, but their long-range goals are guided by ideals. Their activities are regulated by standards, too. Not just academic standards, but standards of discipline as well. Even standards of decorum.

Because public attitudes toward education tend to be conservative, the public periodically calls for more rigorous standards for schools. This happened in the late 1950s. The Soviets had launched the Sputnik satellite, and the public was convinced that more math and science in the schools would produce more and better scientists and engineers.

A generation later it happened again. The decline of America's global economic dominance was blamed on schools. Bizarre as that sounds, it renewed the demand for rigorous academic standards. School districts and even entire states required more academic courses of everyone. Standards for grades and for promotion were raised, swelling the ranks of students who would be at risk of failure. Minimum competency standards threatened the loss of a diploma for those who failed to meet them.

But in the rush to establish standards, the role of ideals in education is easily forgotten. This is not a trivial role. We need to keep in mind how important the difference is between standards and ideals for the way we run our schools.

Ideals are what people strive for. Standards are what they try to meet. You can fail to achieve an ideal, yet not be a failure. But falling short of a standard is what we *mean* by "failure."

Ideals keep us going when the world seems oppressive and unrewarding. They embody our values, our hopes, our deepest beliefs. Specific enough to aim at, ideals are broad enough to allow some freedom of action. While often personal, ideals can be shared

with others because their breadth has room for disagreement about the actions they imply. In this way ideals unite people in common efforts without dictating what their behavior must be. The open-endedness of ideals makes it possible to share them, and thus makes possible distinctively human communities. The U.S. Constitution is an embodiment of shared ideals. It commands broad allegiance while at the same time inspiring heated argument over its implications for action.

Standards, on the other hand, are explicit, precise, and quantifiable. Unlike ideals, they specify exactly what behavior is called for and what results are acceptable. Standards are what we get when authorities agree about performance within an explicitly defined range of activities. There is a standard foot and a standard meter. There is a standard for performance (par) on every golf course. There are standards for automobile emissions controls and for elevator safety.

The initial phases of complex human enterprises are guided by ideals. Standards aren't applied until much later, when the enterprise has become widespread, manageable, and familiar. The Wright brothers were guided by their ideals in the development of their flying machine. Today's commercial airliners are expected to meet the standards of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Human civilizations are inspired and guided by ideals. They are regulated according to standards. But when one is substituted for the other in an activity, there is bound to be some confusion if not conflict. Ideals are too vague to regulate anything with precision. On the other hand, the uniformity and specificity of standards makes them unsuitable for inspiring effort in people. That may be why establishing and raising standards as a means of school reform has produced only harassed test-takers rather than scholars.

If anything lends itself to the inspiration and guidance of ideals, it is the education of the young—"to the limits of their potentials," we say, whatever those potentials might be. "To be President," we hope, or another Shakespeare, another Madame Curie. "To make the world a better place to live in," is another ideal; "to be self-sufficient" is still another. The best efforts of teachers and parents are inspired by ideals. Sometimes, of course, the ideals are too vague to be very useful.

But standards are applied in education, too. They direct our efforts and distinguish success from failure. Just as an automobile that doesn't meet standards goes back to the factory, students who don't meet standards go back to the classrooms from which their classmates just graduated.

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But the parallel between industry and education is difficult to maintain. In industry, the uniformity of standards promotes fairness and helps decision-making. If car manufacturers complain that they can't meet uniform safety standards, they can be told to stop production until they can. Applying the standards protects consumers and plays no favorites among carmakers.

In education, matters are not so clear-cut. Suppose some students fail to meet a certain standard of reading proficiency, and suppose their teacher insists that they simply cannot meet the standard this year. What is to be done? There is no production line that can be stopped. But the apparent defects of these children call for treatment considerably more delicate than is likely to be given to the defective welds on a Pontiac chassis. We can require the children to take another year to try to meet the standards they are currently failing, but research evidence shows that retention does little good for students who fail, and may do plenty of harm.[1]

There are times when standards can be applied to people in a precise and fair way. Someone who wants to be a physician or a competitor in the Olympic games has to meet the same standards as any other applicant or contestant. If the applicant can't meet the standards, she can change her goals and pursue another activity or career. But what can students do who fail to meet school standards? They can't pursue another activity or career because school is the only one the law allows: it's compulsory. Even if they fail to meet the standards, they must remain students.

Thus the use of standards in educational settings raises serious problems, and not just for students who are at risk of failure. Many young people in school have talents and interests that don't match up with the standards that are popular at a given time. Since by definition standards are uniform (i.e., they're the same for all), these young people are disadvantaged. For example, eligibility for college is currently dependent on meeting standards of curriculum distribution among academic courses. But the school day is finite, and an increase in the number of required academic courses leaves little room for electing nonacademic courses. As these electives become more scarce, the school loses its capacity to serve its diverse population. Fewer students find opportunities to discover, try out, and develop their talents, their interests, and their abilities.

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Critical Thinking Questions

1. If standards are set for school performance, will they remain fixed and never change? If they do change, who should determine what they are? Parents? Policy makers? Teachers? School boards?

2. Should standards be the same for all schools in California, or should they vary from one district to another?

3. Many people are calling for *higher* standards. But can they be set *too* high? How do we decide where the bar should be set?

4. How often should high school students be required to take statewide achievement tests?

5. What should happen to students who do not pass achievement tests?

Section III
High School Graduation Examination

Section III
High School Graduation Examination
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The High School Graduation Exit Exam

One of the most specific forms of accountability for students is the high school graduation exit examination. Effective 2003, students who do not pass the exit exam will not be allowed to graduate.

Beginning in the year 2003, all California high school students will be required to take the exit exam. At that time, students can start taking the exam in their sophomore year. Although *you* will not be required to take the exam, it is worth considering how the prospects of such an examination might have affected you.

The exams themselves have not been created yet, so our discussion is about the *idea* of the exit exam itself and whether it is a good way to improve student learning for *all* students. The articles that follow will bring you into the debate.

~Current Session Legislation~

AB 125 California High School Graduation Examination Program

BILL NUMBER: AB 125 INTRODUCED 01/05/99

INTRODUCED BY Assembly Member Campbell (Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Rod Pacheco)

JANUARY 5, 1999

An act to add Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 60850) to Part 33 of the Education Code, relating to high school graduation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 125, as introduced, Campbell. California High School Graduation Examination Program. Existing law requires that pupils complete certain coursework as a condition to graduation from high school. Existing law, the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, requires school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education to administer to each of its pupils in grades 2 to 11, inclusive, an achievement test. Existing law requires the governing board of each school district to offer summer school instructional programs for pupils enrolled in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, who are assessed as not meeting the district's adopted standards of proficiency in basic skills. Existing law requires the governing board of each school district and each county superintendent of schools to adopt policies regarding pupil promotion and retention.

This bill would impose a state-mandated local program by establishing the California High School Graduation Examination program under which each school district, charter school, and county office of education would be required, commencing in the 2001-02 school year and every school year thereafter, to administer before May 15 a graduation examination designated by the State Board of Education to each pupil enrolled in grade 12, except certain individuals with exceptional needs. The bill would prohibit a pupil from being awarded a high school diploma until he or she attains a score that meets or exceeds the passing score established by the State Board of Education. The bill would require a pupil who does not achieve a passing score to attend a remedial summer school course after which the pupil would be administered the graduation examination a second time. If the pupil does not achieve a passing score, the bill would require the pupil to repeat grade 12. The bill would require the State Department of Education to ensure that each school district, charter school, and county office of education complies with certain reporting and administration requirements.

The bill would require the State Department of Education and the graduation examination publisher to make the examination results available on the Internet.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed $1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed $1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

(For complete text of bill go to: http://www.senate.ca.gov, click on legislation)

~Current Session Legislation~

SBX1 2 Education accountability: high school exit examination

BILL NUMBER: SBX1 2 AMENDED 03/18/99

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 18, 1999

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 15, 1999

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 8, 1999

AMENDED IN SENATE FEBRUARY 25, 1999

AMENDED IN SENATE FEBRUARY 23, 1999

INTRODUCED BY Senator O'Connell (Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Maldonado) (Coauthors: Senators Polanco and Solis) (Coauthors: Assembly Members Alquist, Calderon, Campbell, Correa, Cunneen, and Honda)

JANUARY 19, 1999

An act to amend Sections 37252 and 48980 of, to add Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 60850) to Part 33 of, and to repeal Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 51215) of Chapter 2 of Part 28 of, the Education Code, relating to education accountability, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 2, as amended, O'Connell. Education accountability: high school exit examination.

This bill would require these school districts to offer summer school instruction for pupils who do not demonstrate sufficient progress toward passing the exit examination required for high school graduation. The bill would delete the authorization for the reassessment of pupils who were enrolled in grade 12 during the prior school year and successfully completed the summer program after the completion of grade 12. The bill would provide that these provisions become operative on January 1, 2000.

This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with a High School Exit Examination Standards Panel established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and with the approval of the State Board of Education, to develop a high school exit examination in language arts and mathematics in accordance with the statewide academically rigorous content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. The bill would require the State Board of Education to adopt a high school exit examination that is aligned with statewide academically rigorous content standards. Commencing with the 2003-04 school year and each school year thereafter, the bill would require each pupil completing grade 12 to successfully complete the exit examination as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program. The bill would require the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to study the appropriateness of other criteria by which pupils may demonstrate their competency and receive a diploma.

This bill would impose a state-mandated local program by requiring that the exit examination be offered in each public school and state special school that provides instruction in grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 on the dates designated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, requiring that the results of the examination be returned to each pupil taking the test within 8 weeks of the administration of the exit examination, and requiring provision of supplemental instruction to any pupil who does not demonstrate sufficient progress toward passing of the examination.

This bill would, notwithstanding any other provision of law, require a school district to use regularly available resources, general funds appropriated for after school programs, the Student Academic Partnership Program, funds appropriated to prevent social promotion, and funds for other similar supplemental remedial programs to prepare pupils to succeed on the exit examination. To the extent this would permit expenditure of existing funds for purposes not currently authorized, it would make an appropriation.

This bill would appropriate $2,000,000 from the Federal Trust Fund, from GOALS 2000 funds, to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the purpose of developing the exit examination. The bill would also appropriate $250,000 from the General Fund to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide support services therefor.

This bill would additionally require that notice to include notice that, commencing in the 2003-04 school year, and each school year thereafter, each pupil completing the 12th grade will be required to successfully pass the high school exit examination, and would be required to include, at a minimum, the date of the examination, the requirements for passing the examination, and the consequences of not passing the examination and to inform parents and guardians that passing the examination is a condition of graduation, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

(For complete text of bill go to: [illegible], click on legislation)

Pass this test, earn a diploma

Contra Costa Times, January 29, 1999
By: Ethan Rarick
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California high school students and their parents could be in for a nasty shock sometime in the next few years.

If Governor Gray Davis gets his way, teen-agers will soon face a make-or-break test with high stakes. If you can't pass sooner or later, you don't get your high school diploma.

And judging by the experiences of other states that have latched onto the nation's latest educational fad, many high school kids may flunk the first time they take the exam.

In Virginia, almost 60 present of students failed the math or history portion of a similar test last spring. In Nevada last year, about one out of every three students failed a math exam. In Florida, about 60 percent of students did poorly on a tough new test that could soon become a graduation requirement.

The failure rates may eventually come down—either because the tests have the desired effect and schools get better or because state officials make the exams easier. But many education experts worry the initial jolt could simply push away some students who lose hope they will ever march down the aisle in cap and gown.

"High-stakes tests tend to purge kids from the system," said Bruce Fuller, UC Berkeley education professor who heads Policy Analysis of California Education. "We could just see lots of kids dropping out before their time."

What's more, in California, many of those youngsters have been educated in a system that often seems badly broken. In recent years, the state has abandoned elementary school teaching methods in which spelling wasn't crucial and the right answer wasn't the most important thing in math. But many of the children who were educated under that system, now may be subjected to a precise, demanding test that will determine whether they graduate from high school.

"The problem I have with it is that it really blames the victim," Fuller said. "Students who are the weakest political actors in this whole game and have the least ability to improve the system, can sit through 12 years of mediocre schooling, yet they suffer the strongest penalty."

At the same time, test critics concede that rigorous exams can have some benefits: They set goals for students and teachers, reveal which students need more help and generally crank up the level of the whole system.

True believers in the idea of a high school exit exam offer a simple, direct argument. A high school diploma should signify that a student can do certain things: read at a given level, for example, solve a simple algebra problem. And the only way to make sure the students can do the work is to make them prove it.

Whichever argument is correct, California students seem likely to face an exam.

Davis has proposed the idea as part of his four-pronged education reform package that is now before a special session of the Legislature. The governor wants to start offering the test, which has yet to be written, to high school sophomores in the 2000-01 academic year. Those are the students who will enter the ninth grade this fall.

Reading, writing and math would be covered, and the test would be pegged to the new grade-by-grade learning standards California has adopted.

Experts say it is crucial the test cover material that students have been taught, although some critics have also raised concerns that schools might teach to the test too specifically.

Students would have several chances to take the exam, but eventually it would be an all-or-nothing proposition: fail the test, forget about the diploma.

The small print may change, but the basic idea could easily become a reality. Democrats who control the Legislature are generally supportive of their governor's proposal, and it is likely to get a friendly

reception when the lawmakers open hearings on the issue next week.

Although most current high school students would graduate before the test becomes a requirement, they are divided over the idea.

Joey Peterson, a senior at Antioch High, thought it would stop some students from slacking off and graduating with Ds.

"I think it's good because kids are going to work harder," he said. Still, he added, "I'm happy because I don't have to deal with it."

But other students said it's unfair to base such an important decision on a test score.

"The biggest accomplishment for a lot of kids is that diploma," said Eva Morris, a Richmond High senior. "But that exam will hold a lot of people back unfairly. Some are just not good test takers. One test shouldn't determine if you should graduate."

If Davis gets his way and students do face a new pre-diploma hurdle, California will be jumping on an educational bandwagon. Basic skills tests have been used as a graduation requirement in the South for two decades, and in recent years a number of states have adopted tougher exams aimed not at seeing if students know the bare necessities—skills that normally are taught in about junior high—but if they have mastered the more advanced work expected of high school seniors.

The results haven't always been encouraging.

In Nevada, about a third of high school juniors flunked the math test last spring. When a new, slightly tougher version of the test was given to this year's juniors, the rate for flunking went to almost half.

In Virginia, the numbers were even more devastating. The first time the state's new test was given last spring, only 41 percent of the students passed the math and history portions. Worse still, 97 percent of Virginia's public schools failed to meet schoolwide performance goals laid down by the state.

The Nevada and Virginia tests will be used to deny diplomas. But that has yet to happen, because the students who have taken the tests have not reached to end of their senior year.

Davis administration officials say they have no idea what California's initial failure rate might be, but they insist their goal is to be tough without being punitive.

"The intention is not to litter the road with these kids' attention," said Anne Bancroft, a spokeswoman for the governor's education secretary.

Critics say the test shouldn't be the only criteria used to determine whether or not a student graduates.

Monty Neil, executive director of Fair Test, said his group opposes any system that bases important decisions on one test score. "In our view3, (Davis) is committing educational and testing malpractice," he said. "There's a lot of other information available that is richer and better information about a child."

Others have reached the same conclusion. Earlier this month two authors of a National Research Council study on high-stakes tests concluded that schools should also take unto account other information, such as grades and teacher recommendation, when deciding who gets a diploma.

At least some local educators echoed those ideas.

"I know too many sharp people who just have a phobia, for whatever reason, about taking tests," Haidee Foust-Whitmore, Richmond High principal.

She worries about what would happen to the students who fail the test repeatedly. If they were to repeat their senior year, she noted, high schools would soon have 19-year-olds studying alongside 14-year old freshmen.

Some educators are also worried about the huge number of tests already given to students, especially those headed for college.

All California students take the annual STAR test in most grades and districtwide basic skills tests in high school. Beyond that, there's an extensive list of possible standardized tests for the college-bound: the PSAT, the SAT, SAT II tests, AP tests, Golden State Exams, perhaps even the ACT.

"I think we're getting out of line with the number of tests," said James Perino, superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District.

The exit exam: Legislature shouldn't rush to the test

The Sacramento Bee, January 28, 1999
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Bee Editorials

Being a "high school graduate" doesn't mean much in California these days. Not to the state university system, which now must provide remedial education to half of all entering freshman. Not to employers, who complain that high school diplomas reveal little about a graduate's actual skills.

It is in this dismaying context that Gov. Gray Davis has proposed administering a high-stakes exit exam that all high school seniors would have to pass (at some time during high school) to earn their diplomas, starting four years from now. And this same context makes it hard for anybody to argue with him.

The Legislature, however, should take care before diving into a major education reform – coming on top of many others of the past few years – that could have huge consequences for students, teachers and schools for years to come. While in the long run an exit exam may prove a good spur for students to reach higher, and for teachers to help them, the governor's hurried time line could turn the whole effort into a deeply discouraging exercise. If the test is rigorous as Davis has said he wants, educators predict as many as half of California high-schoolers could fail at the outset.

What would we do with those who don't pass? No specific provisions have been made for them.

Under Davis' time line, the first students to face the exit exam would be the very ones who have suffered the worst of public education in California – record class sizes, crumbling schools, experimental reading instruction and an alarming number of teachers, especially in math and science, who are teaching out of their subject area. The class of 2003 wasn't responsible for any of that; they just bore the brunt of it. Is it fair to now make them pay the consequences, too?

What is sensible in the governor's proposal, which the Legislature will begin deliberating next week, is that final authority over the exam's content rests with the state Board of Education. That at least suggest that an exit exam would not conflict with the new academic standards and statewide grade-level test that the same board put in place a little over a year ago.

But non of that solves the biggest problem facing California schools and students. If student achievement is to improve significantly, it will be because better trained and supported teachers have been put in place all over the state, particularly in the weakest schools.

That's a long-term project, and one that the governor and Legislature have yet to face meaningfully. In the meantime, where high-stakes exit exams are concerned, nobody should be in a hurry.

DAVIS' PLAN FOR A GRADUATION TEST IS FULL OF RISKS

Los Angeles Times, January 13, 1999

By: Richard Lee Colvin

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Gov. Gray Davis' proposal last week to require California high school students beginning in 2003 to pass an exit exam as tough as any in America was applauded by Republicans and Democrats alike.

Despite that warm reception, the idea is by far the riskiest part of his education agenda, one that could trigger a backlash if too many students fail.

Pass and you are a high school graduate in good standing, able to go off to work or college, diploma in hand. Fail and your chances of entering the economic mainstream are slim.

Across the country, about half the states either have or will soon have graduation tests. But most measure skills typically learned in the eighth or ninth grade.

Davis, however, wants to tie the test in California to the state's academic standards. Those standards--just adopted in the past 14 months--are among the most ambitious in the country.

The language arts standards, for example, expect high school seniors to be sophisticated literary critics--able to "analyze the political assumptions" of historical essays and the cultural forces shaping novels. In math, the administration's plan is for the test to gauge whether graduates have mastered algebra and geometry. Then there's science and social studies.

Lorraine McDonnell, a UC Santa Barbara professor who researches the politics of testing, said that even her graduate students are challenged by the civics topics in the social studies standards. "I can't imagine even if you are an incredibly skilled teacher being able to get all of this in," McDonnell said.

The strongest argument in favor of the test is the idea of linking it to the standards. Now, the standards "don't have a lot of authority," McDonnell said. That's because they are voluntary and some districts, including Long Beach, Los Angeles and Pasadena, have chosen different ones.

A test based on the state's standards would change that, McDonnell said. The exit exams would drive the whole system.

In addition, such a test would make students and their parents--not just educators--accountable. Presumably, parents would push their kids harder to do homework and go to school every day. The point of setting the bar high is to "catch people's attention," said Gary Hart, Davis' education secretary.

At the same time, that's also what makes the whole effort enormously risky politically.

First, McDonnell said, the state must make sure that all students have the "opportunity to learn" what they are to be tested on. That means ensuring that teachers are skilled, classrooms aren't overcrowded, textbooks are adequate and so on.

If such conditions are not met, students denied a diploma could well have grounds for a lawsuit. Fear of such lawsuits prompted Arizona officials in November to delay for a year the state's required graduation test. Many teachers there have not even read the standards.

Second, it's likely that large numbers of minority students and students in urban areas--where Davis, a Democrat, has strong support--would fail at first. Among current eighth-graders--the first class to be affected--only 7% of the students not fluent in English scored at the national average on a reading test last spring. Davis' test would be far harder.

That also could spark protests. Texas' graduation test is being challenged in court because minority students are more likely to fail. Nevada and Arkansas have each canceled tests that proved too difficult. And now some in Virginia question the legitimacy of a new standards-based test that 97% of the schools flunked.

In Florida last week, the state and Gov. Jeb Bush were sued by parents whose kids attend schools where as many as three-quarters of the students failed a standardized exam. The failure rate proved that the state had shortchanged the students educationally, the plaintiffs' attorneys argue.

Similar legal and political fireworks can be expected in California if Davis gets his way for an exit exam.

OXNARD DISTRICT MAY TEACH STATE THE ABCS OF EXIT EXAMS; EDUCATION: GOVERNOR'S CALL FOR GRADUATION TESTS COMES AS LOCAL OFFICIALS PURSUE THEIR OWN PLANS FOR CLASS OF 2003.

Los Angeles Times, January 25, 1999
By: Kate Folmar, Times Staff Writer
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At a time when state officials are trying to formulate a graduation or exit exam for high school seniors, the Oxnard Union High School District may beat them to the punch.

Next month, the district will dive into an ambitious plan to write Ventura County's first exit exam--a test with the potential to make or break a high school student's academic career. In so doing, the district governing high schools in Oxnard and Camarillo will offer the whole state a window to the possibilities of such a test and the difficulties of creating one.

The Oxnard district is planning to administer its first exit exam to the class of 2003, whose members will enter high school this fall. The test of language arts, writing and math skills would be a requirement of graduation for all students.

By creating the exam, the Oxnard district may emerge as a pacesetter for the new governor's education reform package, which proposes $2 million for development and adoption of such a test. Because Oxnard began exploring the concept last spring, it has a jump on Gov. Gray Davis' exit exam, proposed earlier this month.

"We really need to assess and ensure that students exit high school with a high level of skills," said Oxnard Union Supt. William G. Studt, whose trustees have endorsed the idea. "On the one hand, it's nice that the governor is interested in the exit exam too. On the other hand, we have to retrench a bit to stay in line with what the state is going to do. We don't want to get too far down the line and have the state change things on us."

The goal, Oxnard officials say, is to make diplomas more meaningful to universities and employers and to elevate student performance in this less-than-affluent, minority-dominated school district. The trick, they add, is to create a local test that is tough yet won't doom students to failure and won't conflict with whatever exam state officials concoct.

Davis and Sen. Jack O'Connell, who introduced the exit exam legislation, intend to make the state exam the most stringent of its kind in the country. About half the states now have, or are planning, to have such a test, but most measure skills learned in eighth or ninth grade.

Davis and O'Connell, a Santa Barbara Democrat who represents part of Ventura County, want the state test questions to match California's academic standards, adopted in the last 14 months, which say high school students should be able to analyze the cultural forces shaping novels and demonstrate mastery of algebra and geometry.

"We want the test to be challenging, yet fair," O'Connell said. "This will be the Super Bowl of tests. I expect you will be able to take the test as many times as you want. You can begin in ninth grade. We want to give students the tools to pass. I expect you'll start to see more tutorial services available through school systems, including after-school tutorials, summer school and Saturday school to assist students."

O'Connell hopes to have his legislation on the governor's desk by April so that test creation could begin 90 days later.

Oxnard officials are assembling a task force of educators to determine what skills their exam will measure. At a board meeting Feb. 24, administrators expect to outline for trustees their plan for crafting an exit exam. They expect their committee of administrators, teachers and counselors to formulate the test and set up a system of remediation to help students who are lagging.

Administrators acknowledge that the logistics of the test will be thorny.

"With any high-stakes change--one that has a bearing on graduation--you want to give ample notice to students, parents and teachers," said Gary Davis, Oxnard's assistant superintendent for educational services. "You need to make sure you have the available curriculum to meet the graduation requirement because the standard will be much higher. The standard will be considerably more than minimum proficiency."

Among the knotty questions Oxnard administrators expect to face are:

How do you write the test? What should be the cutoff point, or threshold, for passing? Should students with learning disabilities or language barriers be given extra help? What do you do with the kids who fail--send them to summer school or other remediation programs until they can pass? Could the district be sued for not providing an adequate education if too many students fail?

"It is not going to be easy, because everyone has their own opinions about what should be on the test," said Ventura County Schools Supt. Charles Weis. "The off-the-shelf tests don't specifically match the curriculum in California. So this won't be quick and easy. But that may mean it's worth doing."

Supt. Studt sees the test as part of a package of reforms--including an extended school year and mandatory summer school for ninth-graders who are two or more years behind in reading--to improve low performance.

"We have a different socioeconomic group of kids," he said. "However, our approach to that is we believe every kid can learn if given the opportunity to do well. We don't want to use socioeconomic factors as an excuse. We're trying to find ways to give our kids a chance like everyone else."

O'Connell said he hopes Sacramento officials can coordinate with Oxnard in developing the crucial test.

"If Oxnard is ahead of us, I hope we could learn from their development process," he said. "We don't need to reinvent the wheel."

Only half might pass school test;
Experts sound off on governor's move to establish graduation exams in California

The San Francisco Examiner, January 10, 1999

By: Julian Guthrie

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More than 750,000 teenagers, would likely flunk Gov. Davis' proposed high school graduation exam the first time around, education experts say.

Those kind of results, and the stunned public reaction to them, have led nearly all of the 19 states with high school graduation exams to backpedal in some form on the idea, education researchers say.

"It's an evolution that brings California up to date with trends nationally," said Stanley Rabinowitz, a co-director of assessment, standards and development at WestEd, an education consulting group in San Francisco.

"But I guarantee it's going to cost (California) millions of dollars. What must be remembered is that the state has to not only develop a test, but figure out what happens when 50 percent of the kids fail, a number that is not unexpected."

In all the education initiatives proposed by Davis in his first week as governor, the idea of forcing students to pass an exam to graduate from high school is destined to jolt parents, teachers and kids.

"The focus has been on fixing lower education: early reading programs, no more social promotion. The culmination of all of this, of course, is graduation, earning a diploma. That's what this is about," said Gary K. Hart, Davis' education secretary.

"If you have an exam that has consequences, and this one will have consequences, you will catch people's attention. Everyone gets geared up."

Special session on exam

The high-stakes "exit exam," like other ideas outlined by California's new self-proclaimed education governor, will be debated in a special legislative session to begin Jan. 19. Davis has called the session to accelerate passage of the school reform proposals.

In his State of the State address Wednesday, Davis vowed the exam would be "second to none in America," requiring mastery of high-level math and English skills.

It would be required as a condition of graduation beginning in 2003, Davis said, "which means that students entering high school this year would be the first kids required to take that examination."

In addition to the 19 states now requiring the exam, seven others have plans to do so.

"This is not just a slight increase over previous years but the greatest increase ever," said Heidi Glidden, an American Federation of Teachers research analyst who tracks such issues. "It comes from real concerns that students are being given diplomas without earning them."

Education researchers caution that passing laws that make diplomas more meaningful is one part of the equation. Coping with the consequences when scores are released is another.

Some states forge ahead with revised exams; others drop them altogether.

In Arkansas, for example, lawmakers were besieged by complaints after a whopping 80 percent of the state's high school juniors failed the math portion of the new exit exam in 1996. The exam was dropped in 1997.

Michigan's was canned

In Michigan, an exit exam was shelved for a year after hundreds of parents complained it was vague and punitive. The exam was not required for graduation but awarded a special seal to student diplomas, with ratings of proficient, novice and not yet novice. The legislature spent several months revising the exam before administering it again this spring.

Arizona school officials delayed a proposed graduation exam by a year after teachers and parents complained that students didn't have adequate time to prepare for the test. It will be given for the first time this spring to the state's sophomore class.

"California has never had a test where individual student scores have stakes attached to them," said Rabinowitz of WestEd. And he cautioned that California educators better be ready with a program to help the large numbers of students who will fail the exam if the state expects those students to graduate.

Indeed, the last two statewide achievement exams reveal a disturbing trend in California public education: The longer kids stay in the system, the worse they seem to do.

On the Stanford Achievement Exam, administered this spring, and the 1994 California Learning Assessment System, scores tended to be lowest in the highest grades. On both exams, high schoolers had the hardest time with the most basic and critical skill: reading.

Not ready for college

And a record number of California's high school graduates are unprepared to do college work. About half the new freshmen entering California State University's 22 campuses require remedial help in English and math, according to the university's placement test.

State schools chief Delaine Eastin favors stricter accountability but says it's premature to require all children to pass an exit exam.

"I believe we don't have the consistency we require yet," Eastin said. "This is something we could do in 10 to 12 years, when the kids who have entered the current, reformed system in kindergarten, are exiting."

Under former Gov. Pete Wilson, who also claimed the moniker of education governor, sweeping education reforms were ushered in, ranging from smaller classes in the lower primary grades to a statewide exam for second- through 11th-graders.

The critical missing link in Wilson's educational improvement plan was a measure to hold students, teachers and districts responsible for performance, educators say.

"We need to rank the order of schools based on test scores and other factors, such as attendance," Eastin said. "Then we ought to say to the failing school or district, "You have one or two years to improve. If you still haven't improved, you will suffer consequences.'"

Davis has proposed $ 200 million to establish a statewide system of rewarding successful schools and punishing faltering ones. He wants to randomly select 200 of the state's worst-performing schools and give them two years to improve or face intervention by outside educators. He also proposed awarding one-time cash bonuses to schools that exceed expectations.

But the exit exam is expected to generate the most heated controversy.

"Any test that is proposed in California is controversial," Rabinowitz said. "All of the controversies that erupted over the Stanford Achievement exam will be doubled with an exit exam because the stakes are much higher. We're talking about withholding diplomas."

Two kinds of protests have erupted over exit exams nationwide, Rabinowitz said. School officials object to having the state usurp local control. Community groups claim the test is biased "when a disproportionate number of minorities fail."

Money could go elsewhere

And some argue the millions of dollars required to adopt and administer such an exam would be better spent elsewhere.

"Because of inequities in society, we already know the well-to-do districts will have high passage rates and the poor areas with large minority populations will have low passage rates," said Bob Schaeffer, public education director for FairTest, a private nonprofit testing and assessment advocacy group based in Cambridge, Mass. "Why not target the money to those groups rather than reinforcing the have's and have-nots?"

A FairTest study, released in early 1998, concludes there is no data showing exit exams improve student performance, Schaeffer said.

"Of the 40 states which participated in the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress exam, none of the top 17, as ranked by percentage of students reaching "proficient' or higher, had a high school graduation test," Schaeffer said.

Another Cambridge, Mass.-based education group, however, endorses such exams.

"People say you're punishing kids with exit exams," said Matt Gandal, director of standards and assessment at Achieve Inc., a bipartisan group of governors and business leaders formed in 1996 to raise academic standards.

"If you don't put these consequences in place while kids are in school, they'll graduate into the work world without being prepared. That is the worst kind of punishment."

STRUGGLING UP THE LONG ROAD TO A HIGH-STAKES TEST

The Sacramento Bee, February 10, 1999

By: Peter Schrag

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By now, almost everyone under the Capitol dome must be starting to figure out that it's easier to issue rousing slogans about tough school standards and rigorous high school exit exams than to actually devise them.

If we have the tough exit exam that Gov. Gray Davis originally called for, then a lot of students will fail; if the exit exam becomes another minimum competency test and almost everybody passes, as some administration sources seem to suggest, what's the point? Either way, we are embarked on a tough and contentious course. The questions being raised in this month's legislative hearings are only the first bumps on a long road.

And indeed, do we really need yet another new test, when we already have STAR, the Standardized Testing and Reporting program, which tests students annually in major academic areas, and which now will be augmented with items tied to the state's new academic standards? If STAR measures academic proficiency in the upper grades, as it's supposed to do, why can't STAR test items be used, beginning in ninth grade, both as benchmarks for a diploma and as diagnostic indicators -- early warning signs -- of the skills in which an individual student needs remediation?

Davis' secretary of education, Gary Hart, points out that the test should send a signal to local districts that more will be demanded, particularly in the education of students who are not headed to four-year colleges and who often get shortchanged in dead-end Mickey Mouse high school courses.

But if the test is only to challenge them and their schools, then why not make that clear? If it's supposed to challenge all students, the exam will require more than one benchmark and California might therefore want to consider two or more levels of diploma, a basic (by whatever name) and an advanced. But that too is an issue that few politicians will be eager to tackle.

The governor says he's willing to listen to good ideas. But his own fast-action call for a high school exit exam makes it hard to give anything the study that such issues deserve other than agreeing on some general piece of legislation, with the tough details to be filled in later.

What makes those details particularly devilish is that they resonate with a host of other test-related controversies. At the head of that list is the fight between advocates of objective multiple-choice exams and the devotees in the education community of "authentic assessment" who distrust all high-stakes testing and want to augment it -- if not replace it -- with analytic essays, art projects and other "performance-based," open-ended measures. There are still people in the state Department of Education who are working to restore something like the controversial California Learning Assessment System test the state abandoned five years ago.

And beyond that there is the broader controversy about equity in academic assessment. Last week, a group of civil rights lawyers filed a federal suit on behalf of a group of rejected applicants against admissions practices at UC Berkeley. The suit challenges Berkeley's use of SAT scores and the additional credit it gives to applicants who have taken advanced placement courses. Those practices, the plaintiffs charge, are not fair measures of academic potential and discriminate against blacks, Latinos and Filipinos, many of whom attend schools that offer few, if any, advanced placement courses.

The suit is a small indicator of what's almost certain to happen when the first group of students are denied diplomas on the basis of some exit exam. In all probability, they'll include a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities who, judging from similar suits in Texas, will charge that the exam is not a good measure of academic achievement and, in any case, unfair to students from schools that provide inferior academic preparation.

More immediately, there's the question of when the new exit exam should go into effect. If it kicks in with the high school class of 2003, as Davis wants, it will hit a whole generation of students who, if the critics of the state's old language arts program are correct, were cheated all through elementary school by the schools' failure to teach them to read; they would thus be punished for the state's negligence. If it's deferred much beyond that date, it will be read as an indication that the state isn't serious. Even now, most of the politicians who will vote on it, Davis included, will be lame ducks, or long gone, when the first students are denied diplomas.

The law could be written in such a way that the exam kicks in with a very low threshold by 2003 but raises the bar gradually for succeeding classes thereby (presumably) giving all concerned -- schools, teachers, students -- a chance to prepare.

Hart points out, correctly, that past experience indicates there's a tendency to water down tests and standards after they're first implemented -- and certainly this new high-stakes test will be particularly subject to that. In a democracy, no set of school or testing standards is the product of some ideal academic criterion; it's always the result of political pressures. We want high standards in the abstract, but we're not sure we want them to leave too many victims along the way, especially when the victims are our own children.

But that problem will only be exacerbated, as it has been in some other states, if the threshold is too high and disconnected from the schooling that the state provides. If the test is to be successful, it will gradually help drive up the quality of our K-12 education, something that strongly suggests a continuing process. Indeed, if school reform generally is to work, it too has to be regarded as a planned, ongoing effort. It can't be treated as a search for a quick-fix, all-time solution that we can put in place today and forget about tomorrow.

Peter Schrag's column appears in The Bee on Wednesday. He can be reached by fax at 321-1996; or by letter at Box 15779, Sacramento, CA, 95852-0779.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you welcome the idea of an exit exam? Why or why not?

2. Is it possible for such an exam to be fair for all students? What would schools have to do to ensure that the exam is fair?

3. Who should decide on a passing score for the exam?

4. How many times should a student be allowed to take an exit exam?

5. What should a school do if large numbers of students fail? Who, if anyone, should be held accountable?

6. Will an exit exam lead to higher dropout rates among high school students?

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Social Promotion

Even kindergarten students know that they are supposed to advance through the grades one year at a time. The prospect of being "left back" is simply too terrible to contemplate and, like most terrible things, it seldom happens. In such a system it is assumed that students will do their best and then move on, some regretfully, some joyfully. Currently, when young children spend an extra year in the same grade, the problem is usually described as one of "immaturity."

But what if the student is moved on without having had academic success? There are, of course, the horror stories of students in high school who cannot read. There are many success stories, too, of students who stayed with their classmates and eventually caught up after lagging behind.

A major proposal for improving California schools is the current legislation that seeks to change our social promotion practices, which keep similarly aged students together. The justification for this practice is that by preserving students' self-esteem and social relationships they will be in a better position to make-up lost ground.

Opponents of "social promotion" believe the prospect of staying back will be a powerful incentive for parents, teachers, and mostly students not to let it happen. No school promotion system is intended to simply push students through the system. The question is, will eliminating social promotion, while at the same time raising academic standards, benefit students or hurt them? The readings that follow will help you develop your own answers.

BILL NUMBER: AB 1626, Pupil Promotion and Retention (CHAPTERED)

CHAPTER 742
FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE SEPTEMBER 23, 1998
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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 1998

INTRODUCED BY Assembly Members Wayne, Alquist, Frusetta, and Leach (Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Baldwin) (Coauthors: Assembly Members Bowler, Brewer, Campbell, House, Kuykendall, Leonard, Miller, Morrissey, Pacheco, Prenter, Richter, and Runner) (Coauthors: Senators Lockyer, Vasconcellos, and Watson)

JANUARY 5, 1998

An act to add Sections 48070.5 and 60648 to the Education Code, relating to education.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1626, Wayne. Pupil promotion and retention.

Existing law requires the governing board of each school district and each county superintendent of schools to adopt policies regarding pupil promotion and retention, and requires a pupil to be promoted or retained only as provided according to those policies.

This bill would, in addition to the policies adopted pursuant to those provisions, require the governing board of each school district and each county board of education to approve a policy regarding the promotion and retention of pupils between specified grades, and would require that policy to provide for the identification of pupils who should be retained or who are at risk of being retained in their current grade level on the basis of specified factors. The bill would require the policy to be based on various other considerations. By imposing new duties on school districts regarding the adoption of this policy, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Existing law, known as the Leroy Greene California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act, requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to design and implement a statewide pupil assessment program that includes, among other things, a plan for producing individual pupil scores based on both the achievement test that is part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and the statewide assessment of pupil performance in the core curriculum areas.

This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to recommend, and the State Board of Education to adopt, levels of pupil performance for the achievement tests administered under the STAR Program in reading, English language arts, and mathematics for each grade level, and would require that those performance levels identify and establish the level of performance that is deemed to be the minimum level required for satisfactory performance in the next grade.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed $1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed $1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Social Promotion Bills Bring Ambiguity and Opportunity

By Ernie Silva

California's New Social Promotion Policy

The Governor's recent approval of the social promotion package, AB 1626 (Wayne) and the companion measures AB 1639 (Sweeney) and SB 1370 (Polanco), has brought ambiguity and opportunity to California's school administrators. In ACSA's special report Student Success in a Standards-Based System our Social Promotion - Best Practices Committee concluded, "Retention is a decision with no general educational benefit for large groups of students." While educators recognized that retention is not supported by research, the politicians did not. Nevertheless, AB 1626 does leave substantial discretion to individual districts to adopt standards and policies for implementing AB 1626 at the local level.

AB 1626 creates a presumption that students who do not meet district-adopted criteria must be retained subject to a district-adopted policy. New Education Code section 48070.5(b) requires a school district to adopt a policy for retention and promotion based on either (1) results of the assessments administered pursuant to statute (i.e., STAR) or (2) indicators of academic achievement designated by the district.

Section 48070.5(d) then requires retention if either measure identifies that a pupil is performing below the minimum standard, unless the regular classroom teacher determines in writing that retention is not appropriate. In essence, AB 1626 creates a rebuttable presumption for retention, unless the classroom teacher has a reason not to retain and puts that reason in writing.

The Ambiguity

The language in AB 1626 creates an ambiguity. Subdivision (b) clearly authorizes the district to choose which measure shall be used in the retention policy. However, Subdivision (d)(1) can be read to require either of two results. One interpretation is that students falling below standard on either STAR or the locally adopted indicators are presumed to be retained regardless of the measure adopted in the local retention policy. This interpretation would seemingly eviscerate the local authority previously granted in Subdivision (b). The second interpretation is that students falling below the standard which was adopted by the district, either STAR or other indicators, are presumed to be retained. This second interpretation would be consistent with the authority granted in subdivision (b) despite the awkward sentence structure.

The Opportunity

The other two bills provide opportunities for a more comprehensive approach to retention and remediation. AB 1639 gives districts flexibility in supplemental instruction programs including after-school tutoring, Saturday classes, summer school, and classes during breaks in year-round schools. SB 1370 provides $75 million for supplemental instruction and $30 million for remedial instruction.

Administrators must now guide their Districts in the adoption of policies to carry out AB 1626. Issues for consideration in local policies include:

- What standards will your district use to determine whether to retain a student?
- What process will teachers use for providing written determinations not to retain?
- What programs will your district provide to assist students falling below standard?

ACSA is in the process of collecting ideas for best practices under the statute. You can send us your ideas through our Retention Survey.

DISTRICTS TACKLE WAYS TO HELP KIDS MAKE GRADE; SOCIAL PROMOTION OR RETENTION POSE EDUCATION DILEMMA

The Daily News of Los Angeles, January 10, 1999

By: Mary Schubert, Daily News Staff Writer

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Teachers and parents have long wrestled with the question of whether it's better for a student struggling in school to be passed along to the next grade level or held back to repeat the work another year.

Will such students learn the academic material the second time around, with an extra year of growth and maturity? Or will they be so demoralized by having fallen behind those their age that ever catching up is unlikely?

A new state law addresses that dilemma, taking much of the decision out of the public schools' hands while instead directing them to provide remedial measures that will help failing students get back on course.

Assembly Bill 1626, which took effect Jan. 1, requires school boards to adopt policies about which students will be promoted to the next grade and which will be retained for another year. The new law also requires the state schools superintendent and state board of education to adopt minimum academic performance standards that students must meet to be promoted.

Statistics on social promotion are hard to come by, mainly because public schools don't want to concede that students sometimes are passed to the next grade even though their grades didn't merit it. The closest barometer of how many students aren't meeting minimum standards is the data on retentions.

School districts haven't been required to keep records of retention or social promotion, but some do so out of curiosity.

In the William S. Hart Union High School District, for example, about 170 eighth-graders - out of 2,235 total in the class of '98 - didn't meet the standards for junior high graduation but were promoted to ninth grade nonetheless, said Leslie Crunelle, assistant superintendent of educational services for Hart.

That's about 7.6 percent of last spring's eighth grade class. In 1996, the only other year for which data were available, 259 eighth-graders didn't meet the graduation standards, Crunelle said.

In the Saugus Union School District, meanwhile, administrators tracked retention and found that it ran about 1 percent. Of the 8,000 or so students enrolled in the district's 12 schools, 85 were held back during the 1997-98 school year, said Joan Lucid, assistant superintendent of instruction for Saugus.

"For the most part, those children tended to be kindergartners or first-graders," Lucid said. The reason for that pattern is students' problems generally become evident early on.

"By the time we've gotten them to the upper grade levels, we really understand that child, and they're not being promoted just for (the sake of) being promoted," Lucid said. "Our teachers have done an outstanding job of monitoring children's progress."

Generally, students who have the ability to catch up aren't held back. "With our limited-English children, we certainly don't want to retain them just because they're learning the language," Lucid said.

With the new law in effect, Saugus and other districts will be concretely outlining who will pass and who won't. Every effort will be made to alert parents and students early in the school year so that remedies can be tried to correct the problem, Lucid said.

"We don't want children passed along who will leave our school system and won't be successful," she said. But children progress at different paces, and some youngsters benefit from repeating a grade - if the situation is viewed as an opportunity for improvement rather than a mark of shame, Lucid said.

"You have some children who walk at 9 months and some who walk at 14 months," she said.

"You have to make individual decisions . . . (and be sure) that the child doesn't have bad feelings that they flunked the grade . . . that they've been bad in some way. Given the gift of time, that child generally will come along," Lucid said.

"We don't want people to view this as punitive. It really is designed to make sure that children leaving the school system are prepared for the next grade level."

The law emphasizes the transitions between sixth and seventh grades, and between eighth and ninth grades.

The standards for promotion to high school have a narrow gap between the maximum credits a student can earn in junior high - 120 - and the minimum credits - 107.5 - to pass, Crunelle said.

The 170 eighth-graders who didn't earn enough credits weren't allowed to take part in junior high graduations but were sent to high school. "Students, particularly at that age level, have not been retained because the research tells us it does not work," Crunelle explained.

"Students become the most at-risk for dropping out. There's a huge body of research that supports that," she added.

A new state law won't erase the fact that some students have trouble in school, but Crunelle said a Hart district program that will begin in the fall will try to make sure those youths prepare themselves for high school.

Such eighth-grade graduates will be channeled into the ninth-grade transition program. Classes will be small, perhaps one teacher for every 22 students. And the ninth-graders will attend school away from the Canyon, Hart, Saugus or Valencia campuses, at a site still to be determined, Crunelle said.

The ninth-graders will learn study skills, receive tutoring and take their academic subjects together. And they will have contact with 10th-grade teachers to ease any anxiety about joining the general high school population the next year, she said.

"Here's what happens to ninth-graders when they enter high school. They have six different teachers. They have a counselor who sees them once or twice a year. And they are one of 130 to 150 students that a teacher sees each day," Crunelle said. "That does not promote individual connection."

Their own reviews of students who are failing in school showed that, while some had discipline problems, some had poor attendance and others had learning difficulties, there was a common thread most shared, Crunelle said.

"What seems to be consistent is that students felt no adult really knew them or was connected to them. If that's true in junior high . . . it's only going to be exacerbated in high school," Crunelle said.

"Our solution is to improve their skills to make the program as 'un-anonymous' as possible . . . by giving them a very small environment for a year, with lots of support."

Send in the tutors; As Inland school districts and students brace for the end of social promotion, more and more parents are paying for outside help to boost grades.

The Press-Enterprise (Riverside, CA), February 14, 1999

Joanna Frazier, The Press-Enterprise

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The school progress report that came home in December tormented Courtney Senger. The 9-year-old was performing poorly in language arts and math - subjects that usually gave her trouble.

But the stakes had shot up. She had heard about a new law, effective Jan. 1, making it harder to pass to the next grade. Her options were stark: Get extra help or risk repeating the third grade. She asked for a private tutor last month for her birthday and got one.

"It scares me because I think I might get held back," said Courtney, who attends Avaxat Elementary School in Murrieta.

"I was really, really bad at math and I wanted a tutor to help me and my mom took me. It makes me feel bad because everybody has to help me and I want to do it all by myself."

The law weighing on her mind - a measure intended to ban the policy of social promotion, or moving children from grade to grade regardless of performance - is adding a new dimension to the usual list of childhood phobias. Al though the law provides for appeals, parents must show that their children would be able to handle the next grade.

And as the anxiety spreads among children and their parents, it is paying off big for chain tutoring companies.

Since the fall, calls have been coming in to Inland area tutoring centers. Owners say the measure helped pump up 1998 earnings to as much as double what they were the year before.

Parents - frantic to keep their children from failing a grade - say spending $1,000, $2,000 and up is worth it in an era when politicians are trying to out-tough each other to improve education. The reaction is contributing to a boom nation-wide for an already robust private tutoring industry. Analysts estimate annual earnings for chain companies to be about $1 billion. Corporate vice presidents are joining directors of storefront centers in watching giddily as a renewed emphasis on education boosts business.

New law spurs change

Sentiment against social promotion is coming straight from the top. President Clinton advocated federal financial rewards for schools that end the practice in his State of the Union address. A few districts, including the Temecula Valley Unified School District, already have abolished social promotion to high school.

The new law allows each school district to set its own criteria for holding pupils back. But success in reading and math will be especially crucial.

Administrators in many Inland area districts said they plan to use scores in those subjects on the Stanford 9 standardized tests as one factor in deciding whether second- through ninth-graders get promoted. Other factors under consideration include classroom grades and writing portfolios.

With a few exceptions, most Inland districts are waiting until the 1999-2000 school year to hold students back based on new criteria. The Legislature set aside an additional $105 million for districts to expand summer school and other remedial programs to help struggling students. First priority must go to students who are held back.

Courtney's mother, Lori Senger, did not hesitate to sign up her daughter at the Sylvan Learning Center in Moreno Valley. The single mother, who teaches preschool, scraped together $1,159 for 36 hours of reading and math instruction. Credentialed teachers work with Courtney once a week, tailoring lesson plans to her level and testing her periodically to measure improvement.

Senger said Courtney tested one grade level behind in both subjects when she began working with the tutor; she had scored in the bottom quarter of students tested on the Stanford 9 last spring. She sees tutoring as her daughter's ticket to the fourth grade, and perhaps as a way to boost her confidence.

"The law really concerns me and I've talked to her about it and she goes, 'Mom, I don't want to be held back,' " said Senger, 26, of Perris. "Her frustration started in the first grade and her self-esteem has really dropped. We were able to work with her and she was improving but she still was like: 'I'm just not smart enough. ' "

Concern aids business

Kay Farish, owner and director of Sylvan Learning Centers in Moreno Valley and Riverside, where revenue increased by 25 percent this year over last, said phone requests for information on how to help children are pouring in.

"Parents are saying, 'Help, help, help! ' "Farish said.

"They've looked at the SAT-9 scores and said, 'My gosh. My child doesn't know how to read,' or 'My child is so frustrated with her math. ' There are some panicked parents out there who come to us. They don't know what their kids are supposed to learn. "

At the Sylvan center in Redlands, owner and director Mel Werber saw enrollment double last month to 177 students compared to a year ago. That increase raised his annual earnings to $850,000 in 1998 from $425,000 in 1997.

But with the good fortune comes hard decisions.

"I don't know what to do about it," Werber said. "I am very concerned that we will outgrow this location, possibly within six months. " Because of the increase in business, he recently began offering tutoring on Saturdays. Sylvan centers operate under the Baltimore-based Sylvan Learning Systems Inc. There are seven sites in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The company has cornered the biggest share of the major tutoring chains in the Inland area next to Kumon USA, which runs 12 Inland centers.

Adam Shapiro, Kumon USA's development manager for Southern California, said enrollment in the company's Inland centers has nearly doubled over the last four years. Shapiro, who credited more stringent education policies and word of mouth for the increase, said he expects the ban on social promotion to help fill five new Inland area centers planned to open this year.

Executives of a third nationwide chain, SCORE! Educational Centers of San Francisco, say California is their fastest expanding market. But the chain only began moving to the Inland area with the opening of a Chino Hills center in December.

Tutoring tycoons are not the only ones pleased with the surging parent demand for extra help.

The anti-social promotion measure's author, Assemblyman Howard Wayne, D-San Diego, sees the concern as an added bonus.

"I fully understand why parents are concerned, and I'm impressed that they are so concerned that they're giving their children extra educational advantages," Wayne said.

He said the point of the law is not to traumatize children by forcing them to stay in the same grade year after year. "The whole idea of the package of bills was to catch kids before they fail themselves and give them the opportunity to catch up," he said. "Retention was seen as the last resort."

Making the plan work

While politicians talk about bringing down social promotion, education researchers estimate that too many students already are held back, to their detriment.

A summary of research on the policy by the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder, found that every year between 5 and 7 percent of U. S. public schoolchildren are retained. The school found 54 studies that showed overall negative effects

from being held back, and reported that dropouts are five times more likely to have repeated a grade than are high school graduates.

Meanwhile, most Inland school administrators still are busy figuring out how to run their own effective programs for students who are performing poorly. Concerns linger about how to fit the programs into already packed schedules and overloaded schools during the summer, after school, on weekends and between sessions.

The Riverside Unified School District, for example, has several committees working on the issue and has not settled on a social promotion plan.

"You need to be, I think, instructionally smart," Riverside Assistant Superintendent Georgia Hill said. "Look, what we want to do here is we want kids to do well in school. If they are at risk of retention based upon our criteria, they will get the intervention. "

Gary Natriello, a sociology and education professor at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York City, said, despite such preparations, he is skeptical about the new law. He worries that California's poorest students will not get the help they need to succeed under tougher standards.

"There are big equity issues here. In a lot of communities, the parents will go to tutors, which means the state should be distributing additional resources in districts where the parents don't have the means to do that," said Natriello, who has studied social promotion policies.

"You're in favor of being tough but the real tough part is coming up with the dollars to meet the standards," he said.

"There's a big trend of that (being tough) because then politically you can stand up and take credit for bringing quality to education. " Marcia Davey, a manager of school apportionments for the California Department of Education, said the Legislature set aside limited funds to get the job done. It capped new money to help second- through sixth-graders at $75 million. Another $30 million was set aside for seventh- through ninth-graders. Davey said that amount is not capped but if districts need more money, the education department will have to ask the Legislature to approve more spending.

Getting enough help

Yolanda Meyers was grateful for the free tutoring her 9-year-old daughter was getting from high school students this school year at Palm Elementary School in San Bernardino. But Whitney still was not academically where she should have been. She needed more.

"The school told us that they were going to have to hold her back because of the new requirements with what the school board was going to be doing," Meyers said. The mother of five runs a small contract painting business out of her San Bernardino home with her husband, Wayne.

"The whole school was in an uproar because they were trying to get all the kids prepared by the end of this school term and all the teachers were saying it's just impossible," Meyers said.

Whitney had been going to the Redlands Sylvan center once a week for a year. But with the news about stiffer rules for passing to the next grade, Meyers said her only option was to pump up visits to four times a week in an intensive reading program. The cost: $31 an hour.

Meyers also sends two other sons, ages 7 and 12, to Sylvan. She said it is not so much that the public schools are bad. She just wants to give her children the best chance to succeed.

"We have spent a ton of money there already. My husband says if he has to work day and night he's going to have to do that just to pay for their education," Meyers said.

"We just really have buttoned down on her and said, 'Whitney, you're going to end up in the same grade if you do not try harder. ' I don't want to stress her out, but if we don't help her now, later on in life it's going to be harder to try to help her. "

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Would you have been promoted every year if the new academic standards were in place?

2. Do you think that many students will not be promoted under the newly proposed system? How do you think students who are not promoted will feel about this?

3. Will parents focus more attention on their child's education if there are clear standards for promotion and the possibility that their children will not be promoted if the standards are not met?

4. Should exceptions be made? Are there any circumstances under which a student not performing up to par should be promoted? Who should be involved in this decision?

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New Ways to Meet the Standards

Section V
New Ways to Meet the Standards
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New Ways to Meet the Standards

When *you raise the bar, you expect everyone to try to jump over it.* If passed, recently proposed legislation will reward students, teachers, and schools who succeed, and punish those who do not.

Sometimes, trying harder is just a matter of will power. Instead of fooling around, you sit down and get your homework done…you set your alarm clock and get to school on time. Parents and teachers know quite well that threats and rewards can get young people moving. "You will fail this course" and "I will have talk to your parents if you don't do this homework," has produced a lot of homework for teachers to read.

But what about those situations where it is not simply a matter of will power? What about the student who is unable to do the homework or does not have parents who have the time or ability to help? In those situations, no amount of threats or rewards will get the homework done.

It is clear that this new legislation is intended to get everyone in schools to work harder and be more successful. Since so many students currently in school are struggling, new ideas must be tried. What follows are a few examples of some of the attempts that have been made to "raise the bar" in California's schools. As you read these articles, consider what changes you would like to see.

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 8/19/98 a.m.

EASTIN RELEASES CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORTS

IMPROVEMENT CONTINUES

SACRAMENTO--"California public education is moving ahead with developing an accountability system, and we are seeing improvement in high school achievement on key academic performance indicators," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, as she released the 1996-97 *California High School Performance Report*. "These gains are occurring despite the fact that California is at the bottom in per-pupil spending among the ten largest states and is about $900 below the national average in terms of per pupil expenditures."

Eastin added, "In the past year, California has adopted rigorous academic standards in mathematics and language arts, and soon we will have standards in history/social science and science. We have launched a statewide assessment program that eventually will measure whether or not students meet those standards, but first we must align our assessments with our standards. Also, we are now building an accountability system that will include rewards and interventions based on student achievement."

Earlier this year, Eastin released a report from the Rewards and Interventions Advisory Committee that she appointed pursuant to legislation. That committee has spurred a number of legislative initiatives to support student and school accountability.

Because of its focus on student achievement, Eastin observed, the *High School Performance Report* represents a model of the type of reporting that should be available to parents and the larger community at all grade levels, and California school districts have already begun to adopt this method of reporting. In the *Performance Report*, high school student achievement is displayed in terms of the percentage of students meeting certain standards, such as completing a specified course sequence with a grade of C or better; scoring above the national average on college entrance examinations; and enrolling in college.

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DATA

The 1996-97 *High School Performance Report* uses the most recent data available to document trends in student performance in California public high schools. (See Attachment: 1996-97 Performance Rates for California's High Schools: Two-Year and Four-Year Growth.) Many of the items have already been reported separately in statewide news releases during the last year. The *High School Performance Report* summarizes these indicators for each comprehensive high school in the state.

- The four-year high school completion rate, an estimate of the likelihood that a ninth-grade student will stay in school through grade twelve, was 87 percent for the class of 1996-97, up 4.1 points from 82.9 in 1994-95.

- The percentage of 1996 high school graduates completing the required course sequence for admission to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) and receiving a grade of C or better is 35.4 percent, up 3.3 points from 32.1 percent in 1994.

- The percentage of seniors (rather than test takers) scoring at or above the national average on the SAT or ACT college admissions tests has increased 0.9 point over four years, from 19.7 percent in 1993 to 20.6 percent in 1997, and 0.6 point over two years from 20 percent in 1995.

- The rate of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate examinations with scores qualifying for college credit has increased significantly--3 points over the last four years, from 10 percent to 13 percent, and 1.7 points over the last two years, from 11.3 percent in 1995. This rate includes qualifying exams taken by all students at a high school, which is then divided by the number of juniors and seniors. It *is not the passing rate for the exams. In 1997*, for example, 64.3 percent of *all AP* exams taken by California students received a qualifying score of 3 or better, compared to the national average of 62.9 percent.

- Overall college attendance shows 59.6 percent of 1996 graduates entered California, private, or out-of-state two- or four-year degree granting institutions in the fall of 1996. This is a gain of 2 points over two years from 57.6 percent for 1994 graduates.

- California public college attendance shows 51.5 percent of 1996 graduates entered as freshmen in UC, CSU, and California community colleges in the fall of 1996. This is a 2.1 point gain over two years from 49.4 for the 1994 graduates.

- The percentage of high school students enrolled in at least one career preparation course fell 2.2 points over the last two years, from 38.1 percent in 1994 to 35.9 percent in 1996. The percentage stood at 39.6 in 1992.

For further information, please contact Pat McCabe, 916/657-3740 or Paula Wenzl, 916/657-3380.

# # # # #

Making 1999 'The Year of Literacy'

The San Diego Union-Tribune, January 12, 1999

By: Edward Lopez

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Source: Lopez is president of the San Diego City Schools' Board of Education.

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Last year was one of opportunity for San Diego City Schools. We laid a foundation for change and reform in the district.

We adopted comprehensive and rigorous grade-level standards in several academic areas. We negotiated a three-year contract with the San Diego Education Association, not only in record time, but without the rancor and strife that had characterized collective bargaining in the past.

We hired Alan Bersin as our new superintendent of public education. Bersin's first act was to organize a new Institute for Learning, committed to the district's new mission to improve student achievement by supporting teaching and learning in the classroom.

We passed the largest bond measure in the district's history by a record 78.49 percent margin.

Nineteen ninety-nine will be the year of literacy. Our many accomplishments of last year have but laid the groundwork for what will be our primary focus this year: improving literacy. We will continue to support students and teachers, learning and teaching, because that is the path to improvement in student achievement.

There are four cornerstones to improving student literacy.

The first one is books. A recent districtwide survey shows our schools have a serious deficit in the number and quality of books available for our children to read. Proposition MM has given us the financial resources to repair and build school facilities, including libraries.

Bond proceeds, however, can only be used to repair and build buildings and infrastructure; not for books and instructional materials. We need donations of books, and we need volunteers to visit our classrooms and read to our children. It is not "rocket science;" children need to read and be read to in order to become good readers.

The materials and volunteer resources we so desperately need must come from beyond the boundaries of our school campuses. A citywide literacy campaign, bringing together the entire San Diego community, is in the advanced stages of planning under the direction of Scott Himelstein, president of the William D. Lynch Foundation. This campaign will be ready to launch in a few weeks, thanks to a vital effort of commitment on behalf of individuals and organizations too numerous to name here.

The second cornerstone to our emphasis on literacy is the Institute For Learning. Chancellor of Instruction Tony Alvarado is incorporating into our schools what worked so successfully in New York City schools. He and his staff of instructional leaders are working with principals to equip our teachers with the training and resources they need to make their students better readers.

Superintendent Bersin has been directed this year to reduce central office administrative expenses in order to free up funds for staff developers at each school site to assist in training principals and teachers. This places a major investment at each school site, critical to the success of our literacy effort.

The district's most important assets are not land, buildings, equipment and furnishings. Our most important assets walk in and out the doors of our classrooms and school campuses every day. They

are our principals, teachers and other school site employees who directly influence the education our children receive.

Our third cornerstone in a successful literacy effort is the closing of the student achievement gap within our district. We are one school district. All 138,000 students deserve an education based on world-class standards, not just a select few.

It is true that many students, particularly African-American and Latino, are performing well below other students in our district. That has gone on for far too long. As part of our emphasis on literacy, we need to be sure those fundamentals that work for students who are achieving are equally available to those who need to improve. What's good for achieving schools is good for underachieving schools as well. We need to be sure all of our schools have the resources they need. That includes reading resources, staff resources and after-school programs to provide extra academic support to those who need it.

As we focus on students who need our support, we must also focus on those students for whom English is not their primary language. We cannot deny them an education. We must do a better job of assisting those students in acquiring fluency in English. We must also view their native languages as a positive, not a negative, when it comes to our educational values. In fact, given our location along the U.S.-Mexico border, we can lead the way in becoming a true biliterate, bicultural school district. This is a positive for all students.

The fourth cornerstone is mutual respect. This is the mortar that holds together the other three. Mutual respect is needed among all of us engaged in improving student literacy. Without mutual respect, it will be impossible to respond to the book deficit problem and the need for classroom readers, or to work together to build a successful Institute For Learning. Without the books and readers or the Institute For Learning, we won't be able to close the student achievement gap or help our English language learners.

Proposition MM was an excellent example of so many diverse groups coming together to see to it that our school facilities problems were attended to. If our deteriorated school facilities could bring together such a coalition of district and community interests, why can't the need we have to improve student achievement do likewise?

FRESHMEN MAY GET SMALLER MATH CLASSES

The Sacramento Bee, January 14, 1999
By: Kristi Garrett, Staff Writer
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Ninth grade math students should benefit as early as this spring from smaller class sizes funded through an expanded state program.

Fewer students in either algebra or pre-algebra classes at all high schools should help in achieving the more stringent math standards recently set by the state, district officials said at a board of education workshop Monday.

The program increases funding provided through 1989 legislation to allow math classes to be taught at 20 students to one teacher, as ninth grade English is currently taught under the same law.

Once the program is approved by trustees at an upcoming board meeting, all ninth grade students in the math level the school designates will attend smaller classes. Laguna Creek, Florin and Valley high schools will target all Algebra I classes, while Elk Grove and Sheldon will reduce the size of Math B classes.

Once administrators have time to juggle classrooms and teachers to reduce Algebra I classes at all high schools, Elk Grove and Sheldon will likely eliminate Math B classes, said Assistant Superintendent Odie Douglas.

While the amended Morgan-Hart Class Size Reduction Act of 1989 provides districts with an extra $135 per student annually, Elk Grove will have to supplement those funds to implement the program.

The roughly $37,000 the first semester for additional teachers' salaries will come from contingency funds and will not affect any existing programs, officials said.

The district needs to fill 6.6 math teacher positions to accommodate the extra classes. However, math teachers are in short supply throughout Northern California. That is one reason Elk Grove would like to get a jump on the competition by starting the program this spring as opposed to waiting until fall, said Deputy Superintendent Jean Johnson.

Superintendent Dave Gordon said the biggest drawbacks to the extra class size reduction are the extra costs to the district, the difficulty of recruiting enough qualified math teachers, and the space requirements that may be needed elsewhere. Further, parents may have concerns about why only the students in specified ninth grade math classes will benefit from reduced class sizes, he said.

Nevertheless, the program should give students the help they need to meet the new, higher math standards adopted by the district, administrators agreed.

"The stakes are high, but the payoff would be high if this pans out," said Gordon.

A LESSON THAT CAN'T BE GRADED

Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1999
By: Sandy Banks
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The air is thick these days with talk of education reform, of adding exit exams and raising standards and providing tougher discipline.

It's good to hear, as far as it goes. But there's one thing missing, one element more likely to come from Mister Rogers than from Bill Clinton or Gray Davis.

Caring.

"It's not talked about, not by teachers, parents, not by politicians," says Bruce Dickson, who in four years as a substitute teacher has been through 300 classrooms in more than 100 schools.

"It's going to make the difference whether we produce decent citizens. But it's not going to make headlines, not going to get votes. Can't you just imagine some politician saying 'Elect me; we're going to have caring in the classroom.' "

When Debby Collins came to Monrovia's Plymouth Elementary as a new principal 11 years ago, she inherited a struggling public school with a dispirited staff and dismal test scores.

She convened a meeting and asked her teachers: "What's keeping you from teaching these kids?"

Their answer: the kids' behavior.

Collins had spent 11 years in the classroom and knew what they meant. It's hard for even the most diligent teacher when a class is constantly interrupted by squabbles, students flouting the rules.

"We tried every kind of punishment you could imagine," Collins recalls. But anger only begat anger.

Now, each day at Plymouth begins with classroom meetings, where students shake hands, greet one another, sing songs, tell stories, share. The teacher offers praise and encouragement and explains the day ahead. It only takes about 20 minutes, but its influence ripples through the rest of the day.

"We've found it creates such a community of shared learners," says Collins, "that you don't have the fights, the arguments that used to take up so much class time."

Lessons in caring. You can't tack them onto a lesson plan.

"What you're really teaching is empathy," explains teacher Marty Kirschen, "and you have to model that for your students. You have to teach yourself to be patient, to really listen."

Kirschen spent eight years moving through dozens of schools as a substitute teacher--his second career, after 20 years as a finance manager in the entertainment industry. In every school, he says, he found "a handful of teachers who are naturally nurturing and giving. And there's another group that wishes they could be that way."

That's the group Kirschen and Dickson are trying to reach with a series of Saturday morning workshops called "Teaching From Our Hearts."

So far, attendance has been disappointing--only about eight to 10 teachers at each session. But Kirschen thinks that reflects not teacher apathy, but his and Dickson's difficulty spreading the word.

They pitched the concept to the school board and the teachers' union but, Kirschen says, neither was interested. "So we decided to start where we are--teacher to teacher--and let it grow."

Kirschen began his first full-time teaching job in the fall. "It's difficult, and I don't always like myself when I'm in front of that classroom," he admits. "But I apologize, say to the children, 'I don't like the way my voice sounded just then, so let me try that again.' "

He'd like every teacher to have a chance to meet regularly with peers, to have a place "where you could say, 'I yelled at Johnny today and I know there's a better way to deal with him,' and we could share ideas, help each other. . . ."

It's not clear that practicing caring will produce smarter, high-achieving kids. The test scores at Plymouth Elementary continue to hover around the 50th percentile--not good, but not shameful either, for a school with such low income and high transiency.

But Collins is not too concerned about test data. She's betting instead on what she sees on the playground, and in the class where she teaches fourth-grade science.

"I believe you can have children who care for one another and who achieve. . . . The other day we were learning about simple machines, and I talked to the students about working cooperatively, about sharing. And I said, 'Maybe sometimes you don't want to share with somebody, because they're not your friend or you don't like them.' And one child raised his hand and said 'Miss Collins, we're all friends in this classroom. You don't have to worry about that.'

"Now I can't write that on a data sheet and use it to say my school is succeeding. I can't prove it, I can't quantify it. But I wouldn't trade it."

* Sandy Banks' column is published on Sundays and Tuesdays. Her e-mail address is sandy.banks@latimes.com.

BETTER SATs BY THE DOLLAR

The Sacramento Bee, January 31, 1999
By: Tony Schwartz
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When Gabe Schwartz received his PSAT results early in his junior year at New York's private Fieldston School, he wasn't pleased. He earned a 980.

"That gave me no shot at getting into a top college," he explains. "I knew the PSAT didn't count officially, and I knew I was capable of doing better. But then you read in the College Board literature how no amount of studying will increase your scores, and you really begin to feel stressed out."

At the recommendation of several family friends, Schwartz (no relation to the author) went to see Arun Alagappan, who runs an academic-tutoring and test-preparation company called Advantage Testing. The average cost for an Advantage tutor in New York City today is $175 for 50 minutes. Alagappan now charges $415 a session for his own services, although the fees were considerably lower when Schwartz went six years ago. Most students see him weekly, often for double sessions, over the course of an academic year.

In case you're counting (and you almost surely are) that comes to approximately $25,000 -- nearly the average annual cost of tuition, room and board at one of the prestigious colleges that most of his students hope to attend.

Schwartz's prep course extended through his junior year, and the following October, he finally took the SAT's. His score jumped 400 points to 1,380 out of a possible 1,600 points -- 800 for the math, 800 for the verbal portion of the test-- and he was accepted at what he calls his "reach" choice, the University of Michigan. His admission would have been almost inconceivable with his original score.

In a culture obsessed with measurement, the SAT has arguably become the single most important test for American high-school students -- an academic and psychic rite of passage that strongly influences future educational options, prompts fierce anxiety and serves as an almost mystical barometer of self-worth.

In the face of a growing debate over whether it is possible to significantly increase scores through tutoring, a mushrooming test-prep industry is catering to those who are convinced that it is. Although recent studies have shown that the SAT is only a modest predictor of future academic performance, particularly among students with scores at the higher levels, this is small solace to the two million college-bound students who take the SAT's each year. With society more focused than ever on brand names, there is a strong conviction among parents and students that attending a prestigious college confers huge future advantages -- and top-ranked institutions are only becoming more selective.

While high SAT scores -- say, above 1,300 -- do not guarantee admission to the most exclusive schools, low scores can be all but disqualifying. The SAT's are among the primary criteria for many sources of financial assistance, and they have become pivotal in debates about affirmative action as well.

Given this atmosphere, it scarcely seems surprising that families are seeking out help for the SATs wherever they can find it, at whatever level they can afford.

The intense demand for Alagappan's time is just the most extreme evidence of how far some parents are willing to extend themselves in an effort to give their children a lift. Alagappan's figures have never been independently reviewed, but he says that the mean gain for the students he tutored in 1997 and 1998 was 266 points, from the first time they took an official PSAT or SAT to the last. Although Alagappan says that he has never turned down a family seeking financial assistance, the majority of his students pay the full price, with the average total cost of working with an Advantage tutor running between $5,000 and $8,000.

On a broader scale, SAT and other standardized-test preparation has become big business, earning hundreds of millions of dollars a year, with services offered at virtually every price level. Kaplan Educational Centers and the Princeton Review, the two largest SAT preparation companies, both offer courses ranging from six to eight weeks -- 36 to 50 classroom hours -- and practice tests for approximately $800. Each company enrolls approximately 35,000 students a year in classes, and offers SAT books, interactive CD-ROMs and on-line preparation services as well. Both companies are expanding rapidly.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Originally, the Scholastic Aptitude Test was meant to provide an immutable measure of intelligence. The brainchild of a Princeton psychology professor, Carl Brigham, it was introduced in 1926 to help elite colleges like Harvard, which had been reserved for the children of the wealthy Eastern establishment, select deserving students from across the country for merit scholarships at a time when high schools varied widely by region.

"The whole point was to use the SAT to X out the effect of background and create a true meritocracy," says Nicholas Lemann, who has written a book on the history of standardized testing to be published next fall. "It was the direct descendant of IQ testing. The idea was that you could test the entire cohort of 17 year olds nationally, find those with the highest scores and train them as a national leadership class."

But if scores can be manipulated, as the test-prep companies promise, what do the SATs actually measure? Do the preparation courses really work?

The College Board, and the organization it contracts out to administer the SATs, the Educational Testing Service, say no. Both are nonprofits, and critical to their credibility is the perception that the SAT offers a relatively level playing field for all students who take the test, and that results cannot be influenced by coaching. Over the last three decades, the board has commissioned a series of studies that have consistently shown that scores aren't much affected by preparation.

"If we were to find that the test were highly coachable in a relatively short period of time," says Don Powers, a research scientist with ETS, "it would undermine the validity claims about what these tests measure." The most recent study, conducted by Powers and Donald Rock and released in November, surveyed 4,200 students who took that SAT and compared those engaged in coaching activities outside of school with a group that did not receive such help.

The study found that the overall sample of coached students gained 21 to 34 points over those achieved by the uncoached sample. Among students who specifically attended Princeton or Kaplan, the average rise was 25 to 40 points. While these latter figures represent the highest overall gains that the College Board has found for coaching in recent years, they are considerably less than half the 140- and 120-point gains Princeton and Kaplan claim respectively for the average student taking one of their courses.

"It would be highly unusual for the types of gains we found to make any difference in college admissions for the vast majority of students," says Wayne Camara, executive director of research and development at the College Board. "Coaching has some effect, but nowhere near some of the claims that some of these companies are making. One reason is that they take credit for every point of gain a student achieves. When you use a control group, as we did in our study, you quickly realize that the average student increases 42 points on the SAT without coaching -- and that 8 percent of them improve more than 100 points."

At the same time, the College Board's study reveals that twice the number of coached students -- 16 percent -- improved 100 points or more on the math, while 12 percent of coached students increased their verbal scores by 100 points or more.

Not surprisingly, Princeton Review and Kaplan -- as well as some outside experts -- were quick to take issue with the College Board's results, citing both the vested interest of the researchers in the outcome as well as the methods of the research itself.

"The notion that you're going to get honest answers from 17 year olds when they're being asked these questions by the testing agency itself is preposterous," says Robert Schaeffer, public education director for Fair Test, a nonprofit group that is trying to eliminate the SAT as one of the criteria for college admissions. The College Board study also failed to take into account the impact of any coaching that students might have received before the PSAT -- even though Katzman of Princeton and Grayer of Kaplan say that a substantial percentage of their students get help that early. Finally, only those who benefited from out of school coaching were counted as "coached," while the rest were designated "uncoached" -- even though at least 18 percent of these students received some SAT preparation as part of their regular classes in school, or in separate extracurricular programs.

"If you misclassify students on coaching, you underestimate its effects," argues James Robins, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at Harvard's School of Public Health.

If the College Board doesn't believe coaching helps, one might wonder why it, too, is in the test-prep business and markets its materials partly through testimonials from students about their point gains.

Wayne Camara of the College Board says that the purpose of these materials "is not to increase anyone's scores" but "to familiarize students with the test."

Coaching companies, of course, have their own interest in convincing students that preparation substantially increases SAT scores. Kaplan and Princeton took legal action against each other over score claims in the early 1990s, leading to an elaborate agreement designed to insure honest reporting on both sides, with the right to monitor each other's findings. Although neither organization has yet produced a controlled, published study of their results, the agreement between them plainly increases the likelihood that their score reports are accurate. "There's no love lost between us, and we keep each other's feet to the fire," says Princeton's Katzman.

There have been some independent corroborations of significant increases attributable to coaching. In 1992, Robert Scheller, a pioneer in SAT coaching, offered a test-prep course through the Bernards Township Board of Education in New Jersey to students at Ridge High School. The 54-hour program was given to 70 high-school students, and the Advocate, a local guidance-counselor newsletter, subsequently reported that the average increase was 196 points.

"All it would take to get credible results on the effects of coaching is a very simple study," says Robins of Harvard. "You hire an independent researcher to find several hundred kids who weren't planning to be coached. Give them the SATs. Flip a coin. Those who come up heads get coaching of one kind or another. The rest don't get coaching. Then you see what happens. It's not a big deal. Maybe the real problem is that everyone is a little nervous about what the study would find."

Why, then, do American high school students feel increasingly compelled to devote substantial time and money to the pursuit of higher SAT scores? The answer lies in an unspoken but self-perpetuating alliance between college-admission officers, the College Board and test-preparation companies. While these groups sometimes have conflicting agendas, each plays a part in supporting the SATs -- and attributing significance to relatively small differences in students' scores.

"Deep down, admissions officers don't want SAT scores to count that much, but the fact is they do," says Michele Hernandez, a former admissions officer at Dartmouth who recently wrote a book describing the process, titled "A Is for Admission." For college officials seeking to distinguish thousands of students from different backgrounds and high schools of varying quality, and different curriculums and grading policies, the SATs do provide a common currency -- whatever their actual predictive power.

"When you're at sea," says Hernandez, "you'll take anything that looks like a landmark."

This is especially so, she says, in a period of accelerating grade inflation across America. In 1996, for example, 36 percent of all high-school students earned average grades of A-minus or better, up from 27 percent in 1987. During that same period, the percentage of students with A-plus averages increased nearly 80 percent.

Whatever the effects coaching has on SAT results, it's clear that those who need it the most are often getting it the least. Hundreds of thousands of youngsters from economically disadvantaged backgrounds don't have the same access to test preparation that kids from more affluent families take for granted. "I feel it's unfair," says a Massachusetts teacher's assistant who couldn't afford to send her 17 year old daughter to SAT tutoring. "A lot of kids who could really benefit from coaching don't get a chance, because some of the programs around here are really expensive, as much as $ 45 an hour, and one hour is not sufficient."

The strongest correlation that exists to future success is family income. This should come as no surprise. Children who grow up in more affluent or highly educated families enjoy advantages that begin at birth with a more intellectually stimulating environment. They go on to attend better schools, enjoy more cultural opportunities and travel more widely. Their parents also have the educational background and resources to help them along the way and to expose them to a culture of high expectations and high achievement. Inequality is everywhere built into the educational system, not least that legacies -- applicants whose parents attended a particular selective college -- have a substantially better chance of admission to that college than nonlegacies with comparable credentials. SAT coaching is finally just another privilege of privilege.

Since the SAT is likely to survive its critics -- in part for lack of a consensus about a preferable and equally efficient alternative -- what are we to make of the rise of the test-preparation business generally and the role of supertutors like Alagappan? It's easy to view Alagappan, with his $ 415 a session fee, simply as the market-savvy beneficiary of a system in which those willing and able to pay the highest price can purchase the highest SAT scores.

I've come to believe he is more interesting, complex and even idealistic than that. At the heart of Alagappan's approach is the egalitarian belief that effort pays off.

Alagappan uses the SATs as a source of motivation for students to learn a range of skills that, he argues, are important in any intellectual endeavor -- among them the capacity to break down and reason through a difficult problem or to acquire information that applies across disciplines.

In the end, Alagappan is simply bringing to the SATs the same qualities we most value in any teacher -- passion, patience, clarity, inspiration. In turn, he has sought to attract people like himself to tutoring by offering them rates comparable to those earned by top professionals in other fields. And he has managed to recruit a group of 100 teachers with impressive credentials in eight locations across the country. His impulse is ideological as much as entrepreneurial.

Alagappan isn't so much teaching the test as simply teaching -- in this case, intensive tutorials in math or reading. Although his model is not replicable on a broad scale, it does suggest that it's possible to attract a better pool of teachers by paying them exceptionally well and that the tutorial form can be a very effective method of instruction.

Indeed, the best way to improve the SATs might be to give up the pretense that students can't improve their scores through tutoring or coaching. "It's ridiculous to view the SAT as a pristine measure that can't be affected," Alagappan says. Indeed, that very idea undermines the value of a test as a motivating force. The SATs send a damaging message to students -- that hard work and preparation don't matter on what many of them regard as the most important test of their young lives.

"What we're really talking about is a very middle-class concept," Alagappan says. "If you're willing to study the material, anyone can improve on anything."

Tony Schwartz, author of "What Really Matters," wrote this report for the New York Times Magazine.

Local control of school reforms urged; Legislative analyst assails one- size-fits-all concept

The San Diego Union-Tribune, February 17, 1999

By: Ed Mendel

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SACRAMENTO -- The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office yesterday joined critics of Gov. Gray Davis' school reforms, calling for local control of new programs that would be created to improve reading, teacher quality, and school performance.

Legislative Analyst Liz Hill said that Davis should consider decentralizing his reforms because the wide range of variations among the 8,000 school districts in California make it difficult to impose a one-size-fits-all plan.

"Moving more of the decision-making to the local level -- that can take into account the variability in local circumstances -- is important, and one that would in effect deliver more bang for your buck," said Hill.

Local control has become a heated issue in a Davis bill that would create peer review programs in which teachers evaluate other teachers, a step that could make it easier to remove incompetent teachers from the classroom.

The peer review bill, AB1X1 by Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, D-Los Angeles, was approved by the Assembly Education Committee last week on a party-line vote of 12-2. Republicans said the program is untested.

But a more important objection to the bill, which can move through the Democratic-controlled Legislature without Republican votes, came from a number of education groups, including the powerful California Teachers Association.

The educators complained that school districts that do not bargain with teachers to create a peer review program would be ineligible for cost-of- living adjustment funds from the state.

"Forcing the state's 250,000 classroom teachers into a program that at best is only anecdotally successful may be a recipe for disaster," CTA lobbyist Sharon Scott Dow warned in a letter to the Assembly committee last week.

The educators want the COLA penalty removed from the bill and to make peer review a voluntary option for school districts. Gary Hart, Davis' education secretary, said the COLA penalty will "get people's attention" and move the program forward.

School districts have done little on their own to adopt peer review programs. Poway Unified has a decade-old program, and peer review also is being launched in the Mount Diablo district in Contra Costa County.

The legislative analyst recommended that peer review be optional, rather than mandatory, and complement rather than replace the existing mentor teacher program. The analyst said that public pressure would help voluntary peer review programs evolve at the local level.

The CTA also objects to a provision that would authorize the state Board of Education to produce guidelines for the peer review program.

"This is a matter for local control and local negotiations," Dow said in the letter. "Adding the state bureaucracy to the process of peer review only serves to clog state offices with unproductive and unnecessary paperwork."

Following the theme of local control, the legislative analyst also said that local school districts should be "the state's point of contact" in a new accountability program to reward high-performing schools and correct low- performing schools.

In addition, the analyst said that parts of a $94 million reading bill should be combined with existing programs and broadened to include other academic skills, giving local schools more flexibility to allocate the funds.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the best ways to help raise academic standards in our schools? Are there non-academic standards that should be implemented?

2. Can we make standards fair so that all students have a chance to meet them?

3. Do you think that students and teachers will try harder now that there will be more examinations to test students' abilities?

4. What would have helped you to become more successful in high school?

Section VI
Appendix

1999-2000 First Extraordinary Session Bills

ABx1 0001 (Villaraigosa and Strom-Martin) **California Mentor Peer Review and Assistance Program for Teachers**
ABx1 0001 would set up a system of teacher-on-teacher competency reviews and eliminate the current Mentor Teacher Program. A school district opting not to participate in this review program would not be eligible for funding for mentor teachers or the annual cost of living adjustment (COLA). This bill is one of the four bills sponsored by the Office of Governor Gray Davis.

ABx1 0002 (Mazzoni and Cunneen) **Education**
ABx1 0002 would spend $94 million to improve elementary reading skills.
The bill would establish the Elementary School Intensive Reading Program, increasing funding to school districts that maintain kindergarten and/or any grades 1 to 4, inclusive, for the operation of a program that provides multiple, intensive reading opportunities for pupils in those grades; establish the Governor's Reading Award Program, to be administered by the state Secretary for Education, to provide awards of up to $5,000 to schools offering instruction in kindergarten and/or any grades 1 to 8, inclusive, whose pupils meet certain reading criteria; require the Secretary for Education to contract for the development and establishment of a public involvement campaign to promote reading in the public schools; and request the Regents of the University of California to develop the Governor's Teacher Scholars Program -- a teacher preparation program, the Governor's Principal Leadership Institute -- an administrator preparation program, and the California Reading Professional Development Institutes. This bill is one of the four bills sponsored by the Office of Governor Gray Davis.

ABx1 0003 (Campbell and Runner) **California High School Graduation Examination Program**
ABx1 0003 would establish the California High School Graduation Examination program under which each school district, charter school, and county office of education would be required, as of the 2001-02 school year and every school year thereafter, to administer before May 15, a graduation examination designated by the State Board of Education (SBE) to each pupil enrolled in grade 12, except certain individuals with exceptional needs. This bill would also prohibit a pupil from being awarded a high school diploma until he/she attains a score that meets or exceeds the passing score established by the SBE and require a pupil who does not achieve a passing score to attend a remedial summer school course after which the pupil would be administered the graduation examination a second time. ABx1 0003 would require pupils who do not pass the exam the second time to repeat grade 12.

ABx1 0004 (Leach) **Remedial instruction -- Academic Warranty Program Act of 1999 -- remedial education reduction plans**
ABx1 0004 would require a public high school which had 20% or more of its graduates who enroll at a campus of the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), or the California Community Colleges (CCC) assigned by the institutions to remedial instruction in English or mathematics, if those institutions have provided written notice to each school district of the standards of proficiency in English and mathematics expected of enrolling first-year students, to prepare a remedial education plan.

ABx1 0005 (Leonard) **Transfer Empowerment Alternatives for Children Act**
ABx1 0005 would require the State Board of Education (SBE), as of 01-01-00, to identify "low achieving schools" -- those schools that perform in the lowest 25th percentile, based on the STAR Program achievement test; authorize a pupil attending a "low achieving school" to receive a transfer award that would allow him/her to transfer to an alternative public school, or to an eligible participating private school, where the pupil could redeem that transfer award; require a private school that participates in the act to administer the STAR achievement test adopted by the SBE but not make private schools subject to other provisions of the STAR program; and provide that transfer awards be an amount that is the lesser of the actual tuition/fees charged by the participating private school, or 90% of the statewide average revenue limit per unit of ADA for that school year.

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ABx1 0006 (Leonard) **Schools -- inspection**
ABx1 0006 would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to inspect each public school at least once every 2 years and submit a report to the Governor, the Legislature and the State Board of Education. The report would be required to rank the schools in categories of comparable grade levels in order of the quality of education offered by the schools, identify the strengths and weaknesses of each school, and include achievement and standardized test scores and include rates for dropouts, attendance, college entrance, and vocation program entrance.

ABx1 0007 (Rod Pacheco) **Pupil testing -- the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program**
ABx1 0007 would require the administration of a reading achievement test to pupils in grade 1; a teacher to use the results of these achievement tests in considering a pupil's progress; the school district to ensure that a pupil's results are forwarded to each subsequent teacher upon the pupil's assignment to a class taught by that teacher; the test publisher to provide aggregate scores at the classroom level in addition to the other required aggregate scores; and the State Board of Education, no later than 01-01-00, to designate for use as part of the STAR Program in grades 2 to 11, inclusive, a single entry-level test that measures grade level competency. This bill would require each school district, charter school, and county office of education, commencing with the 2000-01 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter, to administer this test to each of its pupils in grades 2 to 11, inclusive.

ABx1 0008 (Battin and Strickland) **Class size reduction -- grades 7 and 8**
ABx1 0008 would establish the Grades 7 and 8 Class Size Reduction Act of 1999.

ABx1 0009 (Runner) **School districts -- governing boards -- video surveillance**
ABx1 0009 would prohibit the governing board of a school district from causing a video camera to be installed and operated in any place on a school site unless the board first adopts a policy concerning the installation and operation of video cameras. This bill would require a governing board that has already caused a video camera to be installed and operated in any place on a school site to adopt a policy concerning the installation and operation of the video camera or remove and cease to operate the video camera until the policy is adopted.

ABx1 0010 (Runner) **Secretary of Education**
ABx1 0010 would establish an Office of Education in state government under the supervision of the Secretary of Education. This bill would require the secretary to be appointed by, and hold office at the pleasure of, the Governor, and to serve as a member of the Governor's Cabinet.

ABx1 0011 (Runner) **Educational resources -- inflation adjustments**
ABx1 0011 would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to compute an inflation adjustment in the 1998-99 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter for the allocation of funding to school districts. The calculation would provide an amount for districts that have a base revenue limit per unit of ADA for the prior fiscal year that is equal to or below the statewide average base revenue limit per unit of ADA received by each district of similar size and type in the prior fiscal year. A separate calculation would be performed to determine an inflation adjustment for districts that have a base revenue limit per unit of ADA for the prior fiscal year that is greater than the statewide average base revenue limit per unit of ADA received by each district of similar size and type in the prior fiscal year.

ABx1 0012 (Runner) **State Teachers' Retirement System**
ABx1 0012 would add an additional, optional, so-called Rule of 85 service retirement plan, to the State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) that would authorize service retirement for a member age 55 years or any older age specified by the governing board, who retires on or after 07-01-00, with a minimum of 5 years of credited service, without any allowance reduction, subject to specified conditions, including if the total of the member's age and credited service is at least 85, and if retirement occurs within specified periods. The plan would be optional to each employer, be applicable to all qualified employees, and be effective only if the employer, by formal action, makes specified determinations and transmits the actuarial equivalent amount of money and the STRS related administrative costs to the STRS.

ABx1 0013 (Runner) **Income taxes -- deduction -- classroom supplies**
ABx1 0013 would allow a deduction in an amount equal to the costs paid or incurred by a teacher for classroom supplies used in connection with teaching kindergarten, or grades 1 to 12, inclusive, at any school in California. This bill would also provide that a specified 2% floor on miscellaneous itemized deductions shall not apply to the deduction.

ABx1 0014 (Runner, Bates, and Campbell) **Categorical education funding reform**
ABx1 0014 would reform public school categorical program funding by consolidating various programs into 4 block grant programs: the School Improvement Block Grant Program to provide funding to school districts and school sites for use in meeting school improvement needs; the Staff Development Block Grant Program to provide funding to support staff development needs; the Compensatory Education Block Grant Program to provide school district compensatory programs to assist low-income and limited English proficient pupils; and the Alternative Education Block Grant Program to provide funding for dropout prevention programs and support alternative education settings.

ABx1 0015 (Kaloogian) **Teacher Quality and Evaluation Program**
ABx1 0015 would establish the Teacher Quality and Evaluation Program to assess the effectiveness of teachers in ensuring that their pupils progress through the school system and meet state content and performance standards; require the State Board of Education to establish objective and uniform assessment guidelines for the performance of teachers and standards of expected pupil achievement that are aligned with the state content and performance standards; delete the current provision that prohibits the evaluation and assessment of certificated employee performance from including the use of publishers' norms established by standardized tests; and provide that disputes arising from the implementation of the Teacher Quality and Evaluation Program would be subject to binding arbitration unless a governing contract or collective bargaining agreement provides otherwise.

ABx1 0016 (Strickland) **Teachers -- pupil testing -- stipend**
ABx1 0016 would, subject to an appropriation being made for such a purpose, require the governing board of a school district to award a one-time stipend to each teacher who provides direct instruction to pupils enrolled in grades 1 to 6, inclusive, in subjects tested by the achievement test administered under the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program if the pupils assigned to his/her classroom perform, on the average, greater than one grade level beyond their scores at the prior administration of the test. This bill would require the amount of the stipend to be $1,000 for each grade level that the pupils, on average, progress beyond their scores at the prior administration of the test.

ABx1 0017 (Bates) **Teacher preparation**
ABx1 0017 would delete the current provisions authorizing institutions and agencies to develop teaching performance assessments and to implement teaching performance assessments developed by the Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC); require teaching assessments to be developed and administered by the CTC and aligned with both the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and the state content and performance standards for pupils; and prohibit the CTC from awarding a teaching credential to a candidate who has not successfully passed a teaching performance assessment.

_____ (Zettel and Bates) **Teacher credentialing -- successful service -- probation -- peer review**
ABx1 0018 would provide that factors required to be considered in determining whether a teacher has provided successful service include whether a teacher's pupils have made sufficient academic progress as measured by student test scores from the statewide achievement test (test scores would be reviewed over at least a period of 3 years), a peer review evaluation based on the peer review process recommended by a Peer Review Task Force, and comments from the parents/guardians of the teachers' pupils. This bill would also add successful passage of a subject matter examination or assessment to the minimum requirements for maintaining the validity of a clear multiple or single subject teaching credential.

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ABx1 0019 (Zettel) **Certificated employees -- permanent employment**
ABx1 0019 would establish a task force, the members of which would be appointed by the State Board of Education, to review the process of permanent employee classification for certificated employees.

ABx1 0020 (Maddox) **School security training**
ABx1 0020 would establish the Grant Program for School Security Personnel Training that would be administered by the School/Law Enforcement Partnership for the purpose of distributing grants to school districts and county offices of education for training for school security personnel. It would require the Partnership to develop criteria, guidelines, and procedures for the program that would be required to include priority in the awarding of grants for school districts that demonstrate the greatest need, as determined by the latest school crime data.

ABx1 0021 (Maddox and Zettel) **Pupils -- suspension -- expulsion -- controlled substances**
ABx1 0021 would require the principal or superintendent of schools to immediately suspend, and to recommend expulsion, of a pupil he/she determines to be in unlawful possession of any Schedule I or Schedule II controlled substance, including possession of not more than one avoirdupois once of marijuana.

ABx1 0022 (Robert Pacheco) **School community policing partnership**
ABx1 0022 would delete authorization to waive the matching funds requirement for the Safe School Policing Partnership Act of 1998. It would authorize participants to use funds appropriated in prescribed provisions of the annual Budget Act for the required local match.

ABx1 0023 (Robert Pacheco) **Jamie Escalante Master Teacher Act**
ABx1 0023 would establish the Jamie Escalante Master Teacher Act, which would require the State Board of Education (SBE) to distribute grants to school districts and county offices of education to reward master teachers from funds appropriated for that purpose. The act would establish a mechanism to nominate prospective master teachers through input from parents, teachers, and school administrators, determine the monetary amount of the master teacher grants and the number of grants available for each district, and establish a requirement that master teacher grant recipients provide information to the SBE in a form and manner as determined by the board. This bill would also require the SBE to develop criteria, guidelines, and procedures relative to this program, including the use of statewide test scores on the statewide achievement tests to measure the progress of a teacher's students (information related to the socioeconomic status and the number of at-risk students in the teacher's classes would also be considered with the scores), and whether a prospective master teacher has attained certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

ABx1 0024 (Baldwin) **Opportunity Scholarships**
ABx1 0024 would require the State Board of Education to identify low-achieving public schools and provide that a pupil attending a public school designated as low-achieving for at least 4 consecutive years would be eligible for an opportunity scholarship which he/she could redeem at a participating private school or an alternative public school.

ABx1 0025 (Baldwin and Bates) **Teacher credentialing**
ABx1 0025 would establish the passage of a subject matter examination as an additional requirement for the acquisition of a preliminary multiple or single subject teaching credential, for acquiring and maintaining a professional clear multiple or single subject teaching credential, and for supplementary subject authorization for holders of standard secondary credentials on or after 01-01-00. This bill would also repeal the provision authorizing the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to waive the subject matter examination requirements and the provision authorizing an out-of-state applicant to verify subject matter competence by the completion of an approved program or its equivalent.

ABx1 0026 (Pescetti) **Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999**
ABx1 0026 would enact the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999, which would require the State Department of Education to rank schools based on the average performance of the school's pupils on the achievement test that is part of the standardized testing and reporting program. Schools would be designated as low performing, underachieving, proficient, or advanced. This bill would also enact a local improvement program and a state intervention program for schools which do not improve their performance after two years of participation in their respective local improvement program.

ABx1 0027 (Leach) **State basic skills proficiency test**
ABx1 0027 would require the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, on or before 01-01-00, to align the state basic skills proficiency test with the state content and performance standards. This bill would also raise the cap on the cost of the fee to obtain a teaching credential from $35 to $40.

ABx1 0028 (Leach) **Teacher training -- accountability**
ABx1 0028 would require the Committee on Accreditation to establish an accountability system based on the passage rates of prescribed teaching performance assessments and subject matter examinations and assessments that are administered as part of the processes of teacher training and qualification for teaching credentials; the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to establish satisfactory passage rates for programs of educator preparation on related examinations and assessments; and the Committee on Accreditation to rank each program of educator preparation based on passage rates and to make the rankings available to the public This bill would also authorize the Committee on Accreditation to place on probation, for a period of 2 years, institutions that, in the determination of the committee, do not demonstrate satisfactory performance and revoke the accreditation of institutions that do not demonstrate satisfactory improvement, in the determination of the committee, during the probation period.

ABx1 0029 (Soto) **Parental compacts**
ABx1 0029 would require each school district to establish a process whereby each parent/guardian of a pupil and the teacher of that pupil is required to enter into a compact that will commit the parent/guardian to assist and cooperate with the educational process of that pupil.

ABx1 0030 (Oller) **School finance -- supplemental apportionment -- snow removal**
ABx1 0030 would make a school district eligible to receive a supplemental apportionment for transportation if the school district expends $10 or more per unit of ADA on snow removal.

ABx1 0031 (Davis) **Pupil testing**
ABx1 0031 would enable pupils in grades 10 and above to take the California State University Entry Level Mathematics Examination and English Placement Test in high school, require each school district to make available, on a rotating basis, facilities at high schools under its jurisdiction for the purpose of test administration, and inform all pupils who have completed the 10th grade that they may take the examinations. High schools would be required to release pupils from their regular classes in order to take a test if the examinations are administered during school hours.

ABx1 0032 (Strom-Martin) **Vehicles -- school buses**
ABx1 0032 would make specific changes to the laws regarding amber warning lights and flashing red signal arm requirements in relation to school buses at rest.

ABx1 0033 (Torlakson) **School Facilities**
ABx1 0033 would encourage the State Allocation Board to seek input form other state and local agencies in regard to funding school safety devices and equipment.

ABx1 0034 (Kaloogian) **Income and bank and corporation taxes -- credits -- schools**
ABX1 0034 would allow tax credits up to $500 per taxable year for school-sponsored activities.

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ABx1 0035 (Soto) **Pilot project for new school principals**
ABx1 0035 would direct the State Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in consultation with the California School Leadership Academy, and ACSA to develop a plan for a pilot project that would assist new school principals to become effective school administrators and instructional leaders.

SBx1 0001 (Alpert) **Education accountability**
SBx1 0001 would create an "academic performance index" with an intervention program for subpar-performing schools and rewards for high-achieving schools. This bill is one of the four bills sponsored by the Office of Governor Gray Davis.

SBx1 0002 (O'Connell) **Education accountability -- high school exit exam**
SBx1 0002 would establish an "exit exam" that every high school student would have to pass before being awarded a diploma. This bill is one of the four bills sponsored by the Office of Governor Gray Davis.

SBx1 0003 (Baca) **Teacher training -- Teacher Corps Act of 1999**
SBx1 0003 would enact the Teacher Corps Act of 1999 to establish programs to be administered by the Student Aid Commission (SAC) for the provision of scholarships, loans, and loan forgiveness to postsecondary students who meet certain criteria, including committing to teaching in a public school with a shortage of credentialed teachers, and for the assumption of loans by the SAC.

SBx1 0004 (Baca) **Teacher training -- Teacher Corps University Grants**
SBx1 0004 would establish the Teacher Corps University Grants Program under the administration of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, a program which would be applicable to each campus of the California State University and the University of California that administers, during the 1998-99 academic year, a program for preparing its students to obtain teaching credentials.

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